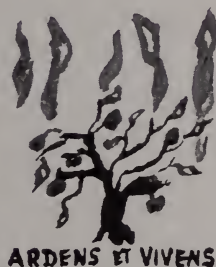


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A LONG AND TROUBLED PILGRIMAGE
The Correspondence of Marguerite D'Angoulême
and Vittoria Colonna, 1540–1545

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PILGRIMAGE

The Correspondence of
Marguerite D'Angoulême and
Vittoria Colonna
1540–1545

BARRY COLLETT



PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Contents

EDITOR'S FOREWORD	vii
PREFACE	ix
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xvii
I THE SPIRIT AND CATHOLIC REFORM OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PROBLEMS AND A SPECULATIVE HYPOTHESIS	1
II THE HOLY SPIRIT AND REFORM IN THE WESTERN CHURCH BEFORE THE REFORMATION	25
III <i>ÉVANGÉLIQUES, SPIRITUALI</i> , AND THE RENAISSANCE OF THE SPIRIT, 1540–1545: AN ASPECT OF CATHOLIC REFORM	47
APPENDICES	
A List of Known Letters Between Marguerite d'Angoulême and Vittoria Colonna, Together with Details of their Provenance and Publication	105
B English Translations of the Letters	111
C Biblical Citations and Allusions	119
D The Original Texts of the Letters between Marguerite d'Angoulême and Vittoria Colonna	125
E Translation of the Dedication of Adamo Fumano to Vittoria Colonna, in His Edition of St. Basil's <i>Divi Basili Magni . . . Moralia</i> , <i>Ascetica Magna, Ascetica Parva</i> (Lyons, 1540), 1 May 1540	133
F English Translations of Selected Letters between Vergerio, Pole, Alamanni, Armagnac, Vittoria Colonna, and Marguerite d'Angoulême	137
BIBLIOGRAPHY	145


Editor's Foreword

These two Renaissance women, Marguerite of Navarre and Vittoria Colonna, exerted quite different but powerful influences in the reforming movements of their respective countries. The one provided a refuge, and more, to the circle most influenced by Bishop Briconnet, whose correspondence with her in the 1520s helped shape her stance among the broadly defined *évangéliques*. The other also supported a wide spectrum of artists and persons of letters, and counted herself a friend of the Viterbo Circle of Cardinal Pole and, among others, Contarini. Both—one of the French *évangéliques* and one of the Italian *spirituali*—finally remained loyal Roman Catholics, though neither's vision of fuller reforms carried the day.

Their exchange of letters give us an insight into the learning, courage, literary style, and devotion of these two who shared many of the same personal losses. The exchange gives us also a flavor of their religious inclinations and aspirations for reform. The letters were written during those watershed years, the early 1540s, when it still seemed possible to hope for doctrinal and institutional agreements sufficiently compelling to avoid even further splits among Christians in Europe. There was, however, a discernible movement in the other direction, from the Ratisbon Colloquy to the final form of the Council of Trent's decreta on justification.

Professor Collett, of the University of Melbourne, does us a great service both in providing a good text and a good translation of these letters and in arguing a most suggestive interpretation of diverse reform movements encouraged by Marguerite of Navarre and Vittoria Colonna.

—David Willis



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Preface

Letters written four and a half centuries ago have intrinsic interest of their own and the power to excite the imagination. If they have been exchanged between two notable Renaissance women, one French and the other Italian, both of social standing, sensitive, and highly literate, then the modern reader might hope for insights into their worlds, either public or private. By bringing to light the understanding of contemporary events possessed by Marguerite d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, and Vittoria Colonna, Marchese of Pescara — an understanding conveyed to each other in often elliptical terms — we open a small window into a whole historical period.

Within its social ethos, this slender but significant correspondence reveals a large measure of empathy and mutual respect, combined with a common imaginative sensitivity to religion, and to art, as expressive of realities beyond this world. They were part of a reform-minded group that included artisans, monastics, and even members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy which expressed strong criticism of the church as an institution and desired its renewal. In both France and Italy the movement for widespread change in the spiritual life of the church was forcefully expressed amongst certain of the nobility. The desire for reform was manifest in biblical studies and there were many nobles for whom Reformation thinking held considerable attraction, and various courtly French links with reforming movements. Marguerite reflected the ethos and concerns of *évangéliques* of the 1520s and 1530s.

However, it must be emphasized that these two women were no ordinary members of their patrician classes. Marguerite (1492–1549), twice-married sister of King Francis I, had lived close to the scintillating power of the French royal court since 1515. Highly educated and creatively literate, she had managed to remain intellectually and spiritually independent of her brother's forceful, engaging but limited view of both temporal and eternal

realms without deviating from her firm loyalty to his jurisdiction. Continuous diplomatic activity, especially from 1520 to the mid-1540s, gave Marguerite an extensive knowledge of state affairs, an acclaimed wisdom in discerning personal ambition from purer motives, and a deep mistrust of career-oriented clergy. When these were combined with her long tenure as the king's confidante and her position on his secret council, it is clear that she could be said to embody the ideal of the elite Renaissance woman.

Vittoria Colonna (1490–1547), widow of the renowned soldier Ferdinand d'Avalos, was not of such exalted status or breadth of worldly experience as Marguerite. Nevertheless, she possessed a birth and an education that placed her amongst the select Italian literati of her day. Author, renowned patron of the arts (especially of Michelangelo), counsellor of clergy, and sole woman amongst Cardinal Reginald Pole's "Viterbo Circle" of humanist churchmen, Vittoria was an acknowledged leader of the Italian Renaissance. Vittoria did not share the intensity of Marguerite's suspicion of the higher clergy, but she was troubled by the excesses, the absence of moral standards, and the intellectual vapidness of the Roman hierarchy — though gravely conscious of the dangers inherent in such judgements.

By the mid-1530s, the ecclesiastical hierarchy in both France and Italy was being assailed by questions that struck at the very tenets of the faith. Pierre Imbart de La Tour believed that there was no more complex, confused or uncertain period, nor yet any more fruitful, than the years between 1520 and 1538. All political and economic realities were charged with that admixture of the sacred and profane which is alien to twentieth-century thinking. Language, mentalities, social customs, religious symbolism, and tradition permeated the daily life of society at every level in France, and all demonstrated how implicitly this European world believed that God was involved — *engagé* — in human affairs. Such attitudes are not necessarily remote from modern thinking. The language in which they were expressed may seem remote to some modern ears. Indeed, some sixteenth-century modes of religious thought may be entirely archaic; but one task of historians is to translate from one idiom to another. When this is done, some of the problems that exercised Marguerite and Vittoria and their contemporaries — supporters and opponents — will be seen to possess intrinsic perennial interest, such as the question of our understanding of ourselves and others, the nature of love, why personal and communal relationships break down, the role of human will and the nature of evil, and what may be done about reforming what has gone wrong and empowering what is good.

While care must be taken in singling out any one reforming trend that influenced Marguerite and Vittoria, it is clear that the movement for church re-

newal whose adherents were known in France as *évangéliques* and in Italy as *spirituali* strongly affected both women. For each, the new thinking about religion was mediated by a leading member of the episcopacy. In Marguerite's case, it was Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet, an outstanding cleric of the Gallican Church. A reformer of long standing at Saint-Germain-des-Prés, he initiated in his Diocese of Meaux a program for renewal with three emphases: biblical studies, preaching from the Scriptures, and vigilant episcopal oversight of pastors and people. Briçonnet's 1521–1524 correspondence with Marguerite proved to be an enduring source of strength for the remainder of her life, while his sending of Michel d'Arande to the royal court gave her access to an excellent biblical scholar. For Vittoria, it was the influence of Cardinal Pole and his group of reforming colleagues (including Giberti, Contarini, and Bembo). Triggered by the dynamic preaching of the Capuchins, Bernard of Ochino and his associates, this group met for discussion in Pole's residence at Viterbo. Vittoria shared in these meetings. There is little likelihood that she would have participated in the discussions of such distinguished and erudite company had she not been able to sustain her intellectual claim to be present.

Marguerite reflected the ethos and concerns of the *évangéliques*, who had nourished her Christian growth in the 1520s and 1530s. Vittoria, for the duration of the correspondence, remained a central figure in the Viterbo circle of the *spirituali*. In addition to the bonds of faith that united Marguerite and Vittoria, it is clear that they believed the spirituality of the laity, particularly that of women, to be more vigorous than that of the higher clergy. This conclusion may be reached from an examination of their other writings, but it is confirmed in their letters to each other. From our perspective, it is also worth noting that sometimes monks and lay people were speaking the same language of piety, although this affinity did not always extend to the secular clergy.

The significance of the exchange of these five surviving letters lies in the personalities involved and in the historical chronology of their contact with each other. The correspondence between Marguerite and Vittoria, both learned and influential women, is a useful, though limited, source of information about sixteenth-century mentalities, for, after all, these were living people with feelings and needs that emerge subtly from the lines they wrote to each other. But there is also value for historians in the timing of the exchange of letters, which took place over a period when the struggle for domination between the new reforming parties and the old medieval orthodoxy was approaching a critical point, when Christian doctrines and institutions became even more a part of European politics, and when pontifical patience with certain individuals and religious orders bent on renewal was wearing

thin. With hindsight, we know that the forces that shaped the decrees of Trent also stifled effectively the expression of many ideas that engaged the thinking of Marguerite and Vittoria. But the forces that influenced decisions taken at Trent were, in the early 1540s, still moving into position.

In sixteenth-century studies, one meets references to these letters from time to time; but they have had little airing in the English language. They were written in an allusive style, and with an abundance of biblical allusions, both of which require detailed textual analysis and sensitive exegesis. Sometimes a single word unlocks a complex scriptural passage having particular relevance to the writer's immediate circumstances. Sometimes theological explanations are required for the letters to yield up their actual, rather than their apparent, content. In this regard, the list of biblical citations and allusions is by no means exhaustive, since a single indicator in the letters may point to many references in the biblical text, all dealing with the same point. It is abundantly clear that both women had a detailed and sophisticated knowledge of the Bible, and could interpret it theologically — though celebratory worship rather than theological exactitude remained always the essence of their spirituality. A vibrant pneumatology animated their reliance on the redemptive aspects of the divine sacrifice; and an awareness of the Spirit in Christian experience undergirds their writing. In Marguerite, strongly Christocentric in her concept of grace and her attitude to spiritual liberty, this emphasis upon the Spirit is more Pauline than in Vittoria, who never resolved the problem of justification, and whose comprehension was more patristically inclined. For this reason we have included a translation of Adamo Fumano's 1540 dedication to her of St. Basil's work — a text crucial to our understanding of Vittoria.

Both Marguerite and Vittoria experienced in their own lives events that gave them a strong sense of the impermanence of all human relationships and loves. At the time of their letters, mostly written when they were in their fifties, they were widowed and carrying heavy responsibilities in a time of religious and social upheaval, which was further marred by their sense of decline in public life and religious faith. Vittoria was sensitive to the vanity of human achievement, brought home to her by the sharp decline in fortunes of the house of Colonna. They both meditated upon their approaching death. It is this experience of life rather than Platonic notions that encouraged in the two women their sense of being citizens of another heavenly country, being held prisoner by temporary earthly ties, and being tried in the crucible of adversity.

The ideas expressed by Luther — not new theology, but theology expressed with clarity, power, and an ear for the times — had taken firm hold in Europe by the 1520s. The effect of those ideas in religious life depended very

much on the reaction within each state of those who exercised authority in both state and church, although the reactions of large numbers of individuals, sometimes in accord with those who held power and sometimes against them, also shaped events. In some countries the reaction to Luther's Reformation was clear-cut, for example in Saxony at one extreme and in the Papal States at the other. In other countries the reaction was more complex, and nearly always involved two kinds of reactions: an appraisal, together with a degree of acceptance or rejection of the Reformers' teachings, and a reappraisal, also with a degree of acceptance or rejection, of the teachings of the Roman Church — teachings that covered a wide, almost confusing, spectrum in 1517, but that began to undergo definition and clarification in response to the challenge of Protestantism. This was particularly the case in France and Italy.

The period was rich in uncertainties, ambiguities, strongly held convictions, spiritual intensity, and irresolvable contradictions in religion and politics. This was undoubtedly no different from earlier periods of religious upheaval; but here historians do have the benefit of considerable evidence about the reactions of individuals. These five letters are an example of those reactions. Each of them reflects uncertainty and conviction, spiritual intensity, and a sense of contradictions unresolved. Every letter also reflects the unease of writers who live very public lives under the suspicious scrutiny of those who, being fortunate enough to possess more certainties about Catholic orthodoxy and few reservations about Protestant ideas, were convinced that they could recognize heretical expressions of Christianity, and would be fearless enough to oppose it in high places. Consequently, the two women were circumspect in the way they expressed things to each other.

Like very many other people in France and Italy, the two women appreciated what Luther had said about the depth of sin, the inadequacy of human works, the necessity of grace and faith, and the authority of Scripture. On the other hand, they accepted the idea that Christ's church was a visible, historical institution under the authority of the bishops of Rome, and teaching doctrines which, despite some distortions at the hands of unworthy prelates, were fundamentally true, sound, and the path to salvation. Consequently, such people appreciated the doctrinal insights of Protestantism, but abhorred the way the theological debate initiated by Professor Luther had degenerated into rancour, violence, schism, and by 1540 a Europe divided by religious beliefs, religious politics, and religious cultures.

Some remained obedient to Rome and the old church. In some places this meant no change, conformity, and security; but in other places it meant persecution. Others became Protestants and worshipped in the new ways in churches of the Reformation. Similarly, in some places this meant conformity

and security because those in power supported or at least condoned the change; but in other places it meant persecution with varying degrees of severity. Marguerite and Vittoria were representative of those who remained within the Roman Catholic Church, but were anxious that the valid theological insights of the Protestant Reformation be taken into account and be used to rejuvenate, purify, and reform Catholicism. The name given to the movement in France is *évangélisme*. The term "evangelicals" has also been applied to the parallel movement in Italy, but there has been much debate amongst scholars over the use of the term and it has been largely replaced in Italy by *spirituali*, the term by which they described themselves.

In the end the *évangéliques* and the *spirituali* exerted some influence on Rome's relating with Protestantism and on some of the formulations of Trent, at which they had a vocal and sometimes effective representation; but they failed to achieve the rapprochement they had desired. During the 1540s they began to disappear as movements. Some embraced Protestantism and travelled to the safety of Protestant countries, or retreated into the Nicodemist safety of keeping their religious views to themselves. Others remained firmly Catholic but continued to appreciate the doctrinal insights and emphases of Protestantism. During later generations, people of similar views, but with different emphases, were to be found in France and Italy. By the 1570s, however, those with whom we are concerned, the first generation of *évangéliques* and *spirituali*, whose religious formation was before 1517, who lived through the period of division and fought for reconciliation, were almost all dead.

By the 1540s, both the *spirituali* and the *évangéliques* were increasingly forced, in Dermot Fenlon's succinct terms, to choose between the "heresy" of Reformation, as formulated by Luther and Calvin, or the obedience of traditional catholic orthodoxy, as defined by the Council of Trent and prescribed by Pope Paul IV. Thus the letters of Vittoria and Marguerite were written during the critical pre-Tridentine years, whilst there was still some room for sensitive maneuvering within the gap created by two extreme religious positions. For Vittoria, this gap would close unexpectedly and in a way that shocked her profoundly. Marguerite, less easily shaken by anything to do with human affairs, continued on her chosen course. Both women died in seclusion, and in the old faith.

Marguerite and Vittoria are a natural focus for at least three separate fields of current historical interest. Students of mentalities, feminism, and spirituality have an obvious concern with any revisionary assessments or additional insights. A more informed appreciation of these women emerges from the letters they shared, in the context of the prevailing intellectual anxiety, spiri-

tual uncertainty, and Rome's growing hostility toward those like them who too openly exercised questions of personal religious belief. Both Marguerite and Vittoria were caught up in the turbulence of the times. Vittoria's position was the more precarious, with her proximity to the heart of Italian religious renewal in Viterbo, her avowed commitment to the troubled Capuchins who were regarded with suspicion by the papal authorities, and with her close relationship to Pope Paul III. Marguerite, who had herself known periods of threat and whose experience in diplomatic affairs gave her pen caution, fulfilled a role of counsellor to her Italian sister.

If this transalpine correspondence is to be understood, the writers' need for restraint and deliberately guarded speech must be tolerated. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the confused theological atmosphere of the times, with the scent of reform in the air, was the immediate environment within which the two women wrote to each other in order to find spiritual encouragement. We reach back and touch their lives through the text of letters that conceal more than they reveal. We are well repaid, however. Overcoming the detachment of distance there flow the warmth, the apprehensions, and the longings of the writers.

When all is said and done, we can fathom the inner dimensions of these two women only through their letters written within the web of human relationships and events. An examination of the letters is both a study of individuals in a living world and a commentary on the process of change in the sixteenth-century church. Therefore, this correspondence is presented in its historical context. Each surviving letter might be regarded as a beam of light into the minds of the writers. Later in the same century both would be accorded by Agrippa d'Aubigne the title *femme savante*. In their own eyes, however, each recognized in the other a pilgrim-companion on the hazardous path of life. It is from this perspective that their letters should be interpreted.

Heather Vose and Barry Collett
Perth, 1990

Acknowledgments

This study had its beginnings in discussions between the late Dr. Heather Vose and myself. Heather Vose was a remarkable woman, a devout wife and mother who with her husband Dr. Noel Vose, a distinguished Baptist leader, moved around the world from their home base in Perth. She was an expert on sea-shanties and had written on Western Australian wild flowers. During her mature years she learned French, studied at the University of Western Australia, and wrote a doctoral thesis on the reforming theology of Guillaume Briçonnet and Marguerite of Navarre.

We met at a conference in Brisbane and found that in middle age we had both undertaken research in religious history of the early sixteenth century — hers in France, mine in Italy. We conceived the idea of a critical edition of the five extant letters of Marguerite d'Angoulême and Vittoria Colonna. At first it was to be a very small volume with some biographical notes on what Heather called our two ladies. We identified the letters and their manuscript and printed versions, started work on the biblical citations and allusions, began to consider the role given to the Holy Spirit in the letters and drafted a preface entitled "Marguerite d'Angoulême and Vittoria Colonna: Individuals within History." Heather called it our "opening shots." It is preserved and printed below in part as a memorial to her. Tragically, an opening shot was all that she fired, for it was at this stage that Heather died in Texas in 1990, shortly after giving a lecture. Her wide circle of friends were deeply distressed, all conscious of the strong and affectionate personality and the deep scholarship that had been lost to us. The appreciation of Heather and our sense of loss was best summed up by her colleague Professor John Tonkin at a memorial service for her. His personal tribute is well worth repeating in full.

The sad event which has brought us together today signals the end of a remarkable and wide-ranging association with the University of Western Australia spanning more than four decades — from the late 1940s,

when a teenager not long out of school joined the Registrar's office as a typist, to the beginning of the 1990s, when a mature scholar was earning the recognition she justly deserved across the nation and the world. Over those years she filled an extraordinary variety of roles — typist, departmental secretary in Zoology, undergraduate and postgraduate student, teaching assistant, tutor and honorary research fellow in the Department of History. That she never occupied the full-time academic post she richly deserved was simply a product of circumstances; yet it was typical of her that she never allowed this barrier to hold her back from her goals.

I could outline at length Heather's many achievements, but the person is more vividly captured in images imprinted on the mind. For me a decade of close association provides a myriad of such images, but one that stands out was captured on a flying visit to Paris in 1981. Here she was, at the age of 50, an impecunious postgraduate student living in a tiny hotel room, surviving on her scholarship and the meagre supplementation which the Department of History could manage, carefully conserving some of her breakfast each day to take with her for lunch; then at the Bibliothèque Nationale always courteous but quietly insistent, refusing to be defeated by the dead hand of French bureaucracy, hanging in there until the archives yielded up their treasures — truly an irresistible force overcoming an apparently immovable object! Then, in the evening, a quick phone call to husband Noel in Cambridge, a postcard to one of the family back in Perth, and then out into the city to savour more of the affordable pleasures that Paris has to offer. Here it was in a nutshell — the dedicated student, the devoted wife and mother, the woman who passionately embraced life in all its variety.

Heather launched out into her new career not really knowing what it would bring and with no conventional expectations. It was just something she had to do. She was supremely adaptable, as historians are supposed, but don't always manage, to be. Denied the possibility of a conventional academic role, she made a virtue of necessity, grasping every opportunity offered and creating fresh opportunities of her own. Already through her research an expert on the early French Reformation, she used the opportunities provided by Noel's position as President of the Baptist World Alliance to develop an expertise on the Anabaptist tradition which brought her international recognition and two honorary doctorates in the last year of her life.

Opportunities closer to home were grasped with an equal passion, and I use the word "passion" advisedly, because it was a mark of Heather's work that she would become totally absorbed in whatever she took up. She entered into the hopes and heartaches of the pioneer Anglican John Wollaston and the spiritual quest of the Catholic Mena

Weld with the same commitment that she had brought to the forerunners of her own tradition. Nor did her fascination with religious history limit her horizons, for she was equally adept in exploring the consciousness of learning women of the Renaissance, or regaling a fascinated audience with the sea-shanties learned at her father's knee. And let us not forget that her first two academic publications were studies of the behaviour and feeding habits of the honey possum.

I am reminded of the statement of the great French essayist Montaigne, who once declared that nothing human was alien to him. The same could be said of Heather, not because she was a sceptic like Montaigne, but because her commitments were large and broad enough to encompass everything human. Perhaps that is why the University, by its very nature a motley and variegated assortment of human beings, was a place in which she felt so much at home.

Heather achieved much in her brief career as a historian, and hopefully much of the work she had in train will appear as a memorial to her in the years ahead. But her most enduring memorial is the indelible personal imprint she left on those fortunate enough to have shared her life in some way, enjoyed her impish wit and capacity to surprise, and valued her integrity, vitality and sheer graciousness.

In its present form this study has been supported by many people. Noel Vose, who assisted with the biblical allusions, and John Tonkin were enthusiastic taskmasters from the beginning, and after the death of Heather were a particular source of support for the project's further development. The Australian Research Council made a Small Grant available for the critical editing. The Reverend Paolo Spanu of Rome and Professor John Scott of the University of Western Australia assisted with much of the translations, the latter rendering our sometimes cruder versions into the most elegant English. Professor Irene Backus of the Mr. Valerio Lucchesi of Corpus Christi College, Oxford reassured us that what seemed to be tortuously obscure passages in Vittoria Colonna really were tortuously obscure. Dom Placid Spearitt and Dom David Barry of New Norcia Abbey supervised and translated much of the Latin, notably the dedication of Fumano. Catherine Waterhouse, Craig D'Alton, and Camilla Russell of Melbourne University were scholarly and assiduous research assistants.

Barry Collett
University of Melbourne, 1998

I

The Spirit and Catholic Reform of the Sixteenth Century: Historiographical Problems and a Speculative Hypothesis

This critical edition of the correspondence between Marguerite of Navarre and Vittoria Colonna comprises their five surviving letters, together with details of provenance and publication. The letters are printed in the original Italian and, for the first time, translated into English, with notes and a list of biblical citations and allusions. The appendices consist of the original texts of the letters, in Italian, newly checked against the sources; a translation of the Latin dedication of Adamo Fumano to Vittoria Colonna in his edition of St. Basil's works, dated, 1 May 1540; and a translation of selected letters between Vergerio, Pole, Alamanni, Armagnac, Vittoria Colonna, and Marguerite d'Angoulême. This study is intended as a working tool for historical teaching and research in an area of history increasingly being studied, especially the two women concerned. Finally, Chapter I gives a selective evaluation of contemporary research and offers a speculative hypothesis about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Catholic reform of the sixteenth century.

The letters, written between 1540 and 1545, are personal and devout, almost every line of them reflecting the concern of the two women for the religious problems of Europe, principally events in France and Italy since the beginning of the Reformation in 1517. The events and controversies of the Reformation have been subject to immense historical and theological investigations of almost every detail of the doctrines, practices, and divisions of the Reformers and their opponents. This compilation of the surviving letters of two leading reform-minded Catholic women during the Reformation controversy makes a small contribution to those investigations. We know that they wrote to each other on several occasions, but those other letters have not

survived, leaving us with only these five, in total about 3,400 words of correspondence. Although the letters are few, they are important. Biographical studies show that both women possessed a sensitive understanding of Reformed biblical themes, a high regard for the cloistered life, a concern for the institutional reform of the church, and a strong network of personal contacts and friendships. These letters also show traces of a belief that bears further consideration, namely their doctrine of reform through the renewal of humanity through the Holy Spirit. It was an approach that contrasted with the less individualistic and more institutional views of their hard-line contemporaries who used the doctrine of the Spirit to legitimize the authority of the church by arguing that its laws, councils, and popes were inspired and validated by the Holy Spirit.

The distinction between individualistic and institutional casts of mind corresponds to two types of Catholic reform that may be distinguished during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Before the Reformation, reform movements were mostly endogenous phenomena, responsive to inward prompting, reflective, and dissatisfied with what was perceived to be institutional abuses and corruptions within the church, and in search of a vibrant and "living spirituality." The various institutional abuses and corruptions were described and lamented by critics, who demanded reforms with such vigor that some modern historians have wondered if criticisms made by contemporaries of the late medieval church were not perhaps exaggerated, and if periodic and increasingly frequent calls for reform had become something of a routine cliché that has misled modern historians. Alongside these institutional abuses and calls for reform, exaggerated or not, there was another, more specifically spiritual, aspect of pre-Reformation reform movements. There seemed to be difficulties in reaching a vibrant rapport with God through the mediating structures of the church. There was also an unmistakable hunger for a *living spirituality*. Before the Reformation, efforts were made from time to time to overcome these twin defects — institutional laxity and spiritual atrophy.

The Protestant Reformation engendered a second type of Catholic reform, a more reactive reform movement responding to outside stimuli. In part, this movement may aptly be called the "Counter-Reformation," reacting to the theological and ecclesiastical challenges of the Reformation. Within this new generation of reform ideas the older endogenous type of reform continued to exist, but now acquired a new sharpness in defining the faults and inward anxieties of both clergy and laity. The combination of external threats and renewed sensitivities resulted in a continuum of reform-minded Catholics, ranging from those who were sympathetic and conciliatory toward Protes-

tants to those who were intransigent in their opposition. Few reformers on this continuum can be easily classified, for even the most conciliatory impulses of reform and the more reactive and hostile current of Catholic reform were stimulated by, and intellectually entwined with, each other. Historians of Roman Catholic reform have for the most part concentrated on Catholic reactions to external challenges (certainly external to the Roman Church by the mid-1520s); on Protestant doctrines of justification, together with their concomitant theology of sin, free will, grace, faith, sacraments, and works; and on Protestant criticisms of the papacy and ecclesiastical abuses, and the ecclesiastical-political schisms. The events of the Reformation have inevitably become the fulcrum of their studies. Consequently, both the historical impact of the Reformation and the historiographical tradition have made it difficult to perceive the history of earlier Catholic endogenous reform as it survived after 1517 and continued, even as it was being affected by the context of the Reformation, to develop in its own right.

Some historians of Catholic reactions to the Reformation have paid special attention to those who attempted to develop within the Church of Rome both theological and practical accommodation to Protestant insights and practices, in the hope of untangling the divisions of the church and in the process of healing schism also reforming the church. Those involved in Italian movements for Catholic reform, originally called "Catholic Evangelicals" but more recently *spirituali*, have been the subject of scholarly debate about their theological beliefs, their ideas of church renewal and reform, the connections between them, and their relations with Rome as they eventually faced a dilemma of choosing between "heresy and obedience." In tandem with their studies of the Italian *spirituali*, historians of the religious history of sixteenth-century France have engaged in studies of French *évangélisme* — a term that has been retained more easily for France than for Italy, partly because in 1951 Eva-Marie Jung summarized the debate to that date and added her own definition of French *évangélisme*.¹

Interpretations of the Catholic reform movements in France and Italy have generally six characteristics. First, they describe contemporary dissatisfactions with the condition of the Church of Rome, its lack of zeal, shallow piety, relaxed moral behavior and general worldliness of the higher clergy, other clergy and the laity, citing particularly the *De Ecclesia Emendanda* of 1537. Second, they observe the sympathy that Catholic reformers had for Protestant doctrine. Luther's insights into sin, salvation by the grace of the

¹ Eva-Maria Jung, "Vittoria Colonna: Between Reformation and Counter-Reformation," *Review of Religion* 15 (1951): 144–159.

Cross by which alone sinful humanity is justified, the response of faith, and the way in which the idea that Christians are justified and saved by grace alone became a principal preoccupation of the *évangéliques* and the *spirituali*. A third theme of historians is how, despite their appreciation, Catholic reformers reacted with caution to the implications of these central Protestant doctrines, especially the denial of any saving value of good works, and the possibility of separation from the Roman Church. The fourth common theme is the insensitivity of some Roman clergy to the Protestant understanding of sin, grace, and faith, demonstrated in Rome's suspicions toward Catholic reformers, who in turn reacted with distress at being suspected and accused of heresy. The fifth theme—or rather method—of historians of Catholic reform is to study reform movements on a largely national basis. Not enough studies have focused on links between France and Italy. The same must be said of European-wide intellectual connections between Catholic reformers in different countries, although some historians have attributed the origins of the Italian *spirituali* to Spanish Illuminism or Erasmian humanism. Finally, historical interpretations of Catholic attempts at reform, its efforts to define doctrine and dispute theologically and to deepen piety and stiffen moral values, have been almost all influenced by the controversies of the Reformation. As if possessed of enormous gravitational attraction, the theology and events of the Reformation have drawn the eyes of both contemporaries and historians to their influence, dominating the historiography of the topic. Even Catholic reform developments existing in their own right, not separate but distinct from their reactions to Reformation controversies, have been overshadowed in this way.

In the past this gravitational pull of the Reformation debates has dominated and sometimes distorted the study of Catholic reform movements. Studies of endogenous Catholic reform in the period before the Reformation have recently increased, but such studies have been complicated by the hindsight that leads historians to see such reforms as “forerunners,” “pre-Lutheran” precursors of 1517. The notion of precursors, devised from hindsight, has its value for historians. They may also, however, divert attention from the contemporary significance of other reforming forces which eventually had no clearly defined historical outcomes and therefore are not seen as precursors. An example is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit held by reform-minded Catholics. Catholic reformers, both those sympathetic to the Reformation and those who were hostile, were seen very much in terms of reaction to Protestantism, with the result that nonreactive reforming teachings that continued after 1517 have been comparatively neglected.

During the last decade, however, historians have begun to analyze Catholic reform in its own terms. In the case of the French reforming Catholics, this has led to recognition that after 1520 the *évangéliques* were driven theologically by forces older than the Reformation and even after 1517 were in part independent of reactions to Protestantism. Before Luther appeared there was a reforming circle at the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés in Paris which supported and applied the active biblical scholarship of Lefèvre d'Étaples and others. By the 1520s the reforming group around Abbot (by now Bishop) Briçonnet and Marguerite d'Angoulême was clearly a continuing reforming movement. Close analysis of their thought by Heller, Veissière, and Vose shows how their own distinctive theology of the Cross rather than Protestantism gave rise to their almost negative *spiritualité*, which in turn was applied to their particular attempts to reform ecclesiastical institutions and processes. Similarly, in Italy there were, for example, the Benedictine scholars of Santa Giustina who were writing on sin, grace, and faith in terms very similar to Luther but whose teachings were in fact taken from Greek patristic theology.²

This is not to deny the strength of Rome's reactions to Protestantism and the divisions produced within the Catholic Church. In fairness to historians who have seen the *évangéliques* and *spirituali* as more or less cohesive groups united by their attempts to reconcile Protestant theology with Catholic doctrine, and in terms of their reactions to Reformation, to Rome, and their resultant dilemma, it must be said that contemporaries of the *spirituali* also assessed them in terms of their reactions to Protestantism. In France, the Faculty of Theology in Paris regarded Marguerite, Briçonnet, and various like-minded people virtually as heretics, and in Italy Ambrogio Politi and the strongly intransigent Franciscan bishop Dionisio Zanettini saw all *spirituali* as products of the Lutheran Reformation, at best misguided soft on heresy and at worst as enemies within the camp. Nevertheless, recent research points more toward complexities, ambivalence, and sometimes contradictions within the Catholic Church before and after 1517, particularly in the notions of what is "reform," most particularly "reform" of individuals. This complex-

² Henry Heller, "Marguerite of Navarre and the Reformers of Meaux," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 33, no. 2 (1971): 271–310; Michel Veissière, *L'évêque Guillaume Briçonnet (1470–1534). Contribution à la connaissance de la réforme catholique à la veille du Concile de Trente* (Provins, France Société d'histoire et d'archéologie, 1986). Heather M. Vose: "A Sixteenth-Century Assessment of the Gallican Church by Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet of Meaux," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 30, no. 4 (October 1988): 509–519; "Marguerite of Navarre: That 'Right English Woman,'" *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 3 (October 1985): 315–333; "More Light on Sixteenth-Century Evangelism: A Study in Cross and Spirit," *Journal of Religious History* 14, no. 3 (1986–1987): 256–268.

ity may more easily be untangled by distinguishing the continuities of spirituality from the changes engendered by the Reformation. These letters of Marguerite and Vittoria suggest a speculative hypothesis about one example of Catholic reform in its own terms, as a continuing and independent development of older teachings — in this case the workings of the Holy Spirit — in a way that is conceptually, though not contextually, independent of reactions to Protestantism.

To explain this speculative hypothesis we need to reassess briefly the historiography of Catholic reform, with a small but deliberate bias toward the Italian *spirituali*, because in their case the theological issues are relatively less involved with large-scale political and regional considerations, and to that extent are theologically clearer than those of their French counterparts. Leopold von Ranke and Ludwig Pastor provide a significant starting point with their interpretation that the theology of Luther and his followers evoked a clear response from highly placed Catholic humanist scholars who were already committed to reform of the church. These reformers, it was argued, possessed not only the administrative ability often associated with those educated in *studia humanitatis*, but also high moral standards and the ability to pursue seriously religious reform both personally and institutionally. By concentrating on Catholic efforts to counter the challenges of Protestantism with reforms, Von Ranke and Pastor set an interpretative course that, despite additions and refinements, has been followed in different ways ever since.

The most substantial addition to the work of Von Ranke and Pastor was made by historians of the mid-twentieth century, notably Hubert Jedin and Giuseppe Alberigo, who drew a distinction between the phenomena of Counter-Reformation and earlier Catholic reform. Catholic reform proper, they argued, was active both before and after the challenges of the Reformation upheavals. The aim of Catholic reform was to nourish the church's spiritual and institutional religious life and put an end to ignorance and moral shortcomings amongst Catholics, especially amongst the clergy. There were several separate attempts at reforms in different countries, mainly by prelates but also sometimes by lay groups. Jedin also observed a pastoral type of revitalizing reform within the Council of Trent's careful definitions of orthodoxy. He questioned the idea that the Council was principally a counter-attack to Protestantism, insisting that it was no mere negative reaction to Protestant initiatives but rather delineated a new kind of Catholic reform, inward-looking and pastoral. Trent was not a mere reactive "Counter-Reformation." The Council certainly did create some overt reactions to Protestantism, comprising efforts to implement its decrees, to discipline the clergy, and to convert

and recover individuals and regions from the embraces of the Reformed faith; but the Council of Trent as a whole, argued Jedin, was more than a reaction to schism.³

The definition of "Catholic reform" was developed further by Delio Cantimori in his book *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento* published in Florence in 1959 and in several subsequent articles. Recognizing that earlier studies had concentrated on the more orthodox reformers, Cantimori turned his attention to the Italian heterodox reformers. He argued that the ideas of those considered to be heretics were part of a wider intellectual atmosphere stimulated by the *studia humanitatis* amongst which patristic studies and neoplatonist ideas were common currency, with renewed expressions of mystical and millenarian ideas in the tradition of Joachim of Fiore. Also, Cantimori studied anticlerical ideas current amongst the laity and anticurial sentiments amongst the clergy. He came to the conclusion that the groups that have been labelled collectively as *spirituali* (or "evangelicals"), in fact consisted of two quite disparate strands, holding both orthodox and heterodox views. Other historians developed Cantimori's line of thought much further: Carlo Ginzburg studied the Nicodemites, Antonio Rotondò studied the anti-Trinitarians, and Massimo Firpo investigated heterodox aspects of Cardinal Morone, who has been a particularly fruitful subject for this method. In the course of his study Firpo also followed up the ambivalence in the concepts of "reformer" and "antireformer" inherent in Cantimori's work. Thus he portrayed Marcello Cervini as a reformer of yet another kind, one who was a relentless advocate of reform but also a ruthless and intransigent opponent of all who sought reform without giving unswerving obedience to Rome. Recently, William V. Hudon has carried the process even further in a new study of Cervini which will be discussed later. This method of revealing ambivalence in persons and historical categories, and then attempting to redefine those categories is most promising.

The historiography of Catholic reform has now concentrated on these two categories of reformers, the conciliatory *spirituali* and their opponents, and the *intransigenti* or hard-line reformers centered on the Curia. In 1979, the two groups were clearly defined by Paolo Simoncelli in his book on "evangelismo italiano": The *spirituali* such as Contarini, Pole, Vittoria Colonna,

³ Hubert Jedin, *History of the Council of Trent*, 5 vols. published 1950–1975 (volumes 1 and 2 were translated by Ernest Graf and published in English [London: Thomas Nelson, 1957 and 1961]); Giuseppe Alberigo, *I Vescovi Italiani al Concilio di Trento* (Florence, Sansoni, 1959). Jedin's book and articles are treated in Wolfgang Reinhardt "Reform, Counter-Reform and the Early Modern State: A Reassessment," *Catholic Historical Review* 75 (1989): 383–404 and in John W. O'Malley's introduction to *Catholicism in Early Modern History. A Guide to Research* (St. Louis, MO.: Centre for Reformation Research, 1988), pp. 1–9.

Giulia Gonzaga, and Morone, were knowledgeable in the New Testament and conciliatory toward Protestants, whereas the intransigent reformers, including Cervini, Caraffa, and Ghislieri, were strongly traditional in their doctrines and piety, resisted change, emphasized hierarchical control, and were firm in their insistence on rules and the value of the Inquisition. These two categories — *spirituali* and *intransigenti* — have been generally accepted by historians, who have also accepted that the decrees of the Council of Trent and the Inquisition opposed and nearly destroyed the *spirituali* approach to reform, leaving hard-line Roman Catholicism more dominant.⁴

Simoncelli then carried his distinction between *intransigenti* and *spirituali* to a more focused and somewhat curious conclusion. In 1988 he published a lengthy article in which he argued that the concept of “Catholic reform” as used by Jedin, Alberigo, and others was historically erroneous. He argued that it was in fact a fabrication of Catholic historians after World War II, aimed at countering anti-Catholic political and cultural developments in postwar Europe. These historians, suggested Simoncelli, had put forward “Catholic reform” as evidence of the enlightened reforming competence of the Catholic Church. In fact, he argued, by the later sixteenth century and until the nineteenth century, Italy was dominated by religious cultural and political repression and by its accompanying economic decline. In reality “Catholic reform” was little more than systematic repression of both clerical laxity and religious dissent. Originally, the *spirituali* and *intransigenti* had much in common, both groups being humanist in education and culture, both being involved in church government at high levels, and both working for reform of curial and clerical abuses such as simony, absenteeism, pluralism, nepotism, and incompetence. Simoncelli contended that the two groups, or approaches to reform, were barely distinguishable until the late 1530s or early 1540s, when divisions between Protestants and Catholics hardened and hopes of reconciliation faded. It was only then that the two groups emerged as two separate factions divided over the nature of reform, that is, whether reform was to include an ethos of reconciliation and accommodation with Protestants, or whether it was to be imposed by confrontation, discipline, and an effective hierarchy.⁵ Thus, according to Simoncelli, the difference between *spirituali* and *intransigenti* rested more upon circumstances than upon theological principle. This interpretative approach weakens the contrast between the two groups.

⁴ Paolo Simoncelli, *Evangelismo italiano del Cinquecento* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, 1979).

⁵ Paolo Simoncelli, “Inquisizione romana e riforma in Italia,” *Rivista Storica Italiana* 100 (1988): 1–125.

Recently, some historians have voiced further doubts about the distinction between *spirituali* and *intransigenti*, and the interpretations that rest upon that contrast. In 1979 Massimo Firpo, in a review of the new edition of Flaminio's *Lettere* observed that although Flaminio was very much one of the *spirituali* he was also on very close terms with Gian Pietro Carafa, who was undoubtedly one of the most intransigent reformers. Moreover, Flaminio later rejected what he saw as the false religious zeal manifest in some members of both groups.⁶ The implication of Firpo's conclusion is that Flaminio in some sense belonged to both groups yet in some sense did not belong to either group. This is an important conclusion because it throws doubt on the notion of the two opposing and separate categories with contrasting attitudes toward church reform, and instead suggests two opposing but overlapping categories. Once again Firpo pursued ambivalence in personal and historical categories, an approach that we shall encounter later in the discussion of the recent studies of Adriano Prospero, William V. Hudon, and other historians.

The historians' pursuit of the ambivalent nature of *spirituali* and *évangeliques* is important but it is still dominated by reactions to Protestantism. This domination is undeniable and inevitable, since the events of the Reformation deeply affected Catholic reformers, drawing participants on all sides of the debate into defining themselves in relation to the new religious divisions of western Europe. The historical reality of the interaction of ideas and reactions is undeniable but it has created the historiographical bias of the French *évangeliques* and the Italian *spirituali* being studied mainly in terms of their reaction to the Reformation. This approach has made the group seem more monolithic than it really was, when in fact, under the umbrella term *spirituali* there were diverse groups, some of which were only indirectly influenced by Protestant theology. Moreover, the tendency to interpret the *spirituali* in terms of their reaction to the Reformation has fostered a tendency to see them as captivated to a greater or lesser extent by the theology of the Reformers, and therefore to overlook or at least pass by the earlier influences that shaped their ideas and facilitated their sympathetic reactions to Protestant insights.

It is therefore a useful exercise to keep reactions to Protestantism and the continuing older Catholic ideas distinct, and to remember that Catholic reformers possessed their own theological roots which went back long before Martin Luther made his protests, and continued throughout the controversies. These origins and their continuing development need to be considered

⁶ Massimo Firpo's review of Flaminio's *Lettere*, ed. Alessandro Pastore (1978), in *Rivista Storica Italiana* 91 (1979): 653-662.

more fully in seeking to understand reforming movements of the sixteenth century. Oliver Logan has shown that amongst upper clergy of Venice there was a wide diversity of theological opinions whose diversity and pluralism make it difficult to assert a dichotomy between humanist and scholastic styles, and also to assess evangelical and heretical ideas. According to their educational backgrounds different groups employed different modes of discourse. Humanist-educated bishops used epideictic emotive rhetoric of praise or blame to sway their congregations or their readers. Dominicans and Franciscans mostly used the methodical, calculated rationality and logic of dialectical ratiocination to argue their case, a style that sometimes became overly schematized and disjointed, but also began to adopt some of the epideictic style. More significantly, Logan has moved analysis away from the scholastic and humanist paradigm by arguing that Venice was dominated by a Franciscan Bonaventuran cosmological view that the world is unified and linked to the divine by Christ, which means that the surface realities of historical events or sacred texts contain signs of the deeper truths just below the surface, which may be indicated by allegorical explanations. This tradition used Greek patristic theology and Duns Scotus to see Christ's incarnation as the uniter of creation with the divinity, so that meditation on Christ could lift sinners out of themselves to a new life.⁷ Here is an important part of the matrix in which the *spirituali* and the *évangeliques* developed their ideas on transformation and the spirit.

Other examples of these older roots have emerged in recent studies. Long before Luther, the Benedictine monks of Santa Giustina of Padua, whose Congregation was spread throughout Italy and into Southern France, had drawn their Protestant-like theology from Greek patristic sources, especially Chrysostom and other Fathers of Antioch. Similarly, the ideas of other *spirituali* such as Peter Martyr Vermigli and Juan Valdés had roots reaching deeper than their reactions to Protestantism. This is not to deny the influence of Protestant ideas, since these two men, for example, certainly became familiar with the Reformers, and Vermigli fled to Protestant lands where he became an eminent Reformed theologian. But there were more strands in their thinking than may be attributed to Reformed doctrines. The way Vermigli and Valdés interpreted the Bible was influenced by contemporary Spanish Illuminism and Erasmian humanism, but more by the older sources of late medieval scholasticism, such as the teachings of Gregory of Rimini. This idea is not new, and for some time scholars have suggested an influence of the *Schola*

⁷ Oliver Logan, *The Venetian Upper Clergy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Study of Religious Culture* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996).

Augustiniana Moderna through Gregory of Rimini upon Luther and other Reformed theologians; but the hypothesis has had mixed success in tracing lines of influence, until Frank James recently demonstrated that the Augustinianism of Gregory exercised a strong formative theological sway upon Peter Martyr Vermigli, and through Vermigli upon Valdés.⁸

Apart from some apparently Protestant theological ideas actually having wider and older sources than the Reformation, there is another reason for caution in discussing Protestant influence upon the *spirituali*. Some *spirituali* warmed to Protestant insights, not because they were theologically persuaded, but out of fellow-feeling emanating from their own human experience and pastoral concerns. For example, Gasparo Contarini's sympathetic approach to Protestant theology arose partly out of his personal crisis of faith in 1511–1512 about the depth of sin and justification *coram deo*, and partly out of his later diplomatic work. The combination of the two made him understand clearly, but impotently, how ideological differences had come to divide Europe in new and terrible ways.⁹ Similarly, sympathy within the Benedictine Congregation of Santa Giustina for Lutheran insights into sin and salvation were related to the monks' well-known pastoral understanding of the complex difficulties of the human condition. As Pietro Aretino, the most anticlerical of humanists and a notorious sinner wrote to Don Ambrogio of Ferrara, "Your kind breast was opened to me the first day you saw me . . . for in your piety there is no mean spiritedness."¹⁰ The reaction of some — perhaps many — Catholic reformers to Protestant doctrine may have been primarily a fellow-feeling about the problems of spirituality that Luther tackled; they were not necessarily persuaded by Protestant solutions to those problems.

The difficulty in discussing Protestant influence upon Catholic reformers becomes clearer when it is recognized that the Reformation controversies were conducted within two different styles of rhetoric: one the moderate and ironic art of persuasion, as seen most markedly in Erasmus, and the other the rhetoric of uncompromising and combative assertion as practiced, for example, by Luther and Thomas More. The two styles are based on differences in personality as well as differences in education and the logic of intellectual and theological positions. Consequently, both the ironic and assertive approaches

⁸ Frank A. James, III, "Juan de Valdés before and after Peter Martyr Vermigli: The Reception of the Gemina Praedestinatio in Valdés' Later Thought," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 83 (1992): 180–208.

⁹ Elisabeth G. Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini: Venice, Rome and Reform* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 11–18, where full historiographical references to his personal crisis are given; also see chapter 4.

¹⁰ Pietro Aretino, *Il primo libro delle Lettere di Pietro Aretino* (Paris: Metteo il Maestro, 1609), vol. 1, 238v–39r.

were found amongst Catholic and Protestants, heterodox and orthodox alike. Those who have been labelled "intransigent" were more belligerent in asserting doctrinal truths, whereas those whom we call *spirituali* for the most part approached doctrinal issues with a more conciliatory and questioning cast of mind.¹¹ People of similar personalities grouped together and gave their groups discernible differences. The *spirituali* represented a particular "cast of mind" that had many variations but was different from that of the *intransigenti*. The differences between the two groups were not only doctrinal but also may be defined in terms of style. The letters of Marguerite and Vittoria provide a striking example of this. Their cast of mind is conciliatory and questioning, and on the few occasions when they do use assertive language, it is in regard to biblical certainties and the need for pious behavior rather than interpretations or doctrinal positions. The personal differences not only make it difficult to interpret Catholic reform solely in terms of doctrinal propositions, let alone reactions to the doctrines of others, but also oblige historians to give personal characteristics much more weight than has been done in the past.

Modifications and adjustments of the old historiographical categories have also been applied to the intransigent faction within the Roman Church. Simoncelli's distinction between two wings of reform led him to speak of the faction's systematic policy of repression, but other historians have questioned whether the ecclesiastical instruments used by the *intransigenti* were as repressive as Simoncelli had believed. Paul Grendler, Edward Peters, and Silvana Seidel-Menchi argue that the Roman Inquisition was not repressive but exercised only mild intellectual control, functioning more as a tribunal for clarification and mediation than as a weapon of ecclesiastical control. In 1988 these questionings were placed in historiographical context by Adriano Prosperi with the argument that, under the influence of Risorgimento attitudes, Italian historians of the nineteenth century had depicted the sixteenth-century Inquisition as an evil force, and had honored its victims as being connected with Protestant Europe's more liberal social views. Historical understanding has been therefore limited, said Prosperi, by the pejorative or praiseworthy categories employed by historians, leading to distorted simplifications, the antidote for which is more archival work, because it is principally archival research

¹¹ Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform: Erasmus' Civil Dispute with Luther* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 101; John O'Malley, "Erasmus and Luther. Continuity and Discontinuity as Key to their Conflict," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5, no. 2 (1974): 47-65; Hilmar M. Pabel, "The Peaceful People of Christ: The Irenic Ecclesiology of Erasmus of Rotterdam," in *Erasmus' Vision of the Church*, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, ed. Hilmar M. Pabel, vol. 33 (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1995), pp. 76-77. Hereafter cited as "The Peaceful People of Christ."

that will expose the modern simplifications and reveal the complex realities of Catholic reform.¹²

Prosperi's warnings about the use of categories coincides with similar reservations expressed by other historians, who have questioned the time of the supposed crisis and defeat of the *spirituali*. Much has been made of the date of the "crisis" in Italy, that is, the point at which the *spirituali's* dream of reconciliation became impossible and they were faced with the choice between Rome and Reformation. Some historians believe that this "crisis" occurred during 1541–1542 following the failure of the Colloquy of Ratisbon, the apostasy of Bernardino Ochino and Peter Martyr Vermigli and the death of Cardinal Contarini. Recently, Gigliola Fragnito and others have argued that the "crisis" period of 1540–1542 did not bring an end to hopes of reconciliation, nor an end to the evangelical attitudes and activities of the *spirituali*. The crisis of 1541–1542 has been exaggerated and it was not until the 1560s that the *spirituali* were obliged to relinquish their dream of reconciliation and their efforts for reconciliation. Anne Jacobsen Schutte has devoted an article to summarizing and supporting this interpretative shift beyond the opening sessions of the Council of Trent, to include the 1550s and 1560s. Other historians have also placed the date of crisis and decline at the ratification of the decisions of the Council of Trent in January 1547, or Pole's failure to be elected to the papacy in 1549.¹³

Consequently, historians are asking some new questions about groupings, conceptual categories, and chronology. One valuable set of new questions focuses on the material world and worldliness. Some economic historians have doubted Simoncelli's picture of sixteenth-century Italy as racked by repression and its consequent economic and cultural depression, and have argued that, on the contrary, it was a period of stability, peace, economic activity, prosperity, and cultural energy.¹⁴ Barbara McClung Hallman's economic investigations have shown that the *spirituali* spoke of reform as an idealistic

¹² Paul Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press 1540–1605* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977); Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (New York: Free Press; London: Collier Macmillan, 1988), pp. 105–121; Adriano Prosperi, "L'Inquisizione: verso una nuova immagine?," *Critica Storia* 25 (1988): 269–284.

¹³ Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Periodization of Sixteenth-Century Italian Religious History: The Post-Contarini Paradigm Shift," *Journal of Modern History* 61, no. 2 (1989): 269–284; Massimo Firpo, "Il Beneficio di Cristo e il Concilio di Trento," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 31 (1995): 45–72, especially 68; Paolo Simoncelli, *Il Caso di Reginald Pole. Eresia e santità nelle polemiche religiose del Cinquecento, Uomini e Dottrine*, 23 (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1977), pp. 59–74.

¹⁴ William V. Hudon, *Marcello Cerrini and Ecclesiastical Government in Tridentine Italy* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), p. 11, note 30 on p. 180. Hereafter cited as *Marcello Cerrini*.

goal, but in practice treated their ecclesiastical careers as a business, acquiring wealthy benefices which they "farmed" efficiently for profit. In this respect reformers (including prominent *spirituali* such as Contarini and Fregoso) behaved very much the same as nonreformers. Her conclusions reinforce the point made by Simoncelli and others that both groups existed on a kind of continuum, and her conclusions almost question the *spirituali* as a distinctly identifiable reforming group. Hallman's conclusions throw doubt, however, not so much on their identity and credentials as a reforming group, as on the way historians describe and define them.¹⁵ She argued that reforms attempted under Paul III between 1534 and 1549 largely failed because of the financial and cultural difficulties in abolishing pluralism, simony, and nepotism. The first two practices were not entirely "abuses," for they involved accepted and legitimate investment and property rights, whilst nepotism, although called an abuse, was also entwined with traditional Italian values of family and social obligation. In such a context, she points out, "the notion of nepotism and patronage as abuses faded beyond recognition."¹⁶ Similarly, Carme Salvo has shown that the history of religious movements in Sicily has not sufficiently taken note of the "complesse vicende" of the island. She has, in a striking phrase, set out "to extend research from the individual to the entire family group."¹⁷ For these reasons attempts at reform foundered, with the result that reform was deflected from the material to spiritual, doctrinal or to other material matters that could be controlled; correct doctrine, repression of error, education of the clergy, preaching, personal piety, glorification of the faith, reform of monasteries and convents, synods, hospitals and so on.¹⁸ The old order of interpretation has thus been reversed: Instead of the desire for spiritual reformation leading to organizational reformation, the failure of organizational reformation has led to attempts at spiritual reformation.

Doubts about the validity of the terms *spirituali* and *intransigenti* were carried to a logical conclusion by William V. Hudon in his biography of Marcello Cervini, who became Pope Marcellus II in April 1555, and is generally reckoned to be one of the more intransigent reformers. Hudon argues that the use of categories has misled historians, and that actually Cervini was

¹⁵ Barbara McClung Hallman, *Italian Cardinals, Reform and the Church as Property* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985). Hereafter cited as *Italian Cardinals*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

¹⁷ Carmen Salvo, "Tra valdesiani e gesuiti: gli Spatafora di Messina," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 109, no. 2 (1997): 541–601. Her aim is "di allargare l'indagine dal singolo personaggio all'intero gruppo parentale" (p. 541). She has set Bartolomeo Spatafora in the context of family "ragione di famiglia," and included culture and practices of the casato feudale, as well as political ambitions and the need for religious renewal.

¹⁸ Hallman, *Italian Cardinals*, pp. 164–168.

friendly and co-operative with the *spirituali*. The complexity of the man calls into question the meaning of both terms, for, if anything, Cervini was both intransigent and at the same time one of the *spirituali*. Hudon therefore suggests that we abandon the terms *spirituali* and *intransigenti* and seek "a more nuanced understanding" of Catholic reform, at least the Tridentine aspect of Catholic reform. Hudon sees both categories of *spirituali* and *intransigenti* as one reforming group, possessing a common grounding in the *studia humanitatis*, loosely unified, but with a diversity of theological and ecclesiastical views. They were, according to Hudon, all "Renaissance humanists . . . implementing practical and positive solutions for problems in the church."¹⁹ Their humanist-based reform distinguished them, firstly from those who looked to reform based on canon law, with little regard for scriptural or patristic inspiration, and secondly from the Spanish and Neapolitan conciliar party at Trent, which considered councils rather than popes to be the best agent of reform. Moreover, the humanist attitudes expressed in their reforming zeal and methods of solving problems were different from Protestant reformers, many of whom themselves had humanist educations but whose concepts of reform involved radical new doctrinal syntheses that denied papal hierarchical authority and were therefore distant from the Catholic world of both *spirituali* and *intransigenti*.

Hudon's conclusion is that the Italian reformers were not split into factions by doctrinal differences and a struggle for power, but were a single multifaceted group unified in their common quest for humanist-based reform. At the heart of their program was not only their humanist biblical and patristic scholarship, but also their humanist concern for good governance. Their humanist education and orientation was applied to contemporary issues of reform and supplied them with effective practical models for reform, and their study of Scripture, the patristic writers and the decrees of the ancient church revealed to them, they believed, the proper roles for contemporary popes, bishops, and others who held authority in the church. If Hudon is correct, this multifaceted group of humanist reformers had a concept of "reform" that enmeshed religion, learning, and politics in a much more ambitious way than their real opponents, those canon lawyers who simply sought to re-draft and tighten canon law, and extend its methods of application and its discipline.

Students of *studia humanitatis* were trained to seek and practice the arts of good governance, and this training was applied to ecclesiastical and spiritual reform. Cervini and others knew that reform, especially of the clergy, re-

¹⁹ William V. Hudon, *Marcello Cervini*, p. 15.

quired an emphasis on the skills of government and management. They sought effective church government, not simply a rigid, hierarchical and highly disciplined church aimed at controlling piety and repressing Protestant ideas and other forms of dissent. The paradigm was good and skillful governance, not control; the sense of community was not overridden by the concepts of domination and suppression. According to Hudon, humanist-educated Catholic reformers realized that successful reform required that those in authority understood problems and could carry out swift, practical solutions following models of reform learned from scriptural and patristic studies. This was best done by an enlightened papacy applying these models through a similarly enlightened hierarchy and canon law. It was for efficiency rather than any repressive motivation that Cervini worked to strengthen the papal position. He sought for existing institutions, the papacy, councils, curia, and episcopacy, to be renewed by apostolic ideals, productive and efficacious administration, doctrinal clarity, and pastoral leadership at all levels. Sometimes this would involve investigation and punishment, for, as Cervini observed in 1546, "in the end rewards and punishments are what help one govern the world well," but Cervini's crisp realism about the need for discipline and encouragement can hardly be said to amount to repression.²⁰

According to Hudon, their emphasis on good governance in reform has given the mistaken impression that Cervini and others were *intransigenti*, given to repression, and hostile to the more liberal-minded *spirituali*. In fact, Cervini and others were not idealistic reformers, as had been Giles of Viterbo and Cajetan in an earlier generation, but simply practical reformers who set out to get things done within the context of papal administration and diplomacy. This required humanist attempts to recover an apostolic style of "church government" by which popes and bishops would guide and strengthen devotional life down to the local level. Reform therefore required centralized and effective papal authority, which meant that reform, in the end, had to be carried out by the pope, not by a council or by individual dioceses. When Cervini rejected Seripando's draft of August 1546 on justification it was not merely because it seemed too favorable to Protestant theology. He rejected it also for another important matter of principle — the draft had not been approved by the Curia, and therefore was not in accord with his conviction that all reform should be directed by the papacy.²¹

In some respects, Hudon's thesis is convincing. He is correct to assert that the "intransigent" Cervini, even Carafa (as Paul IV) and Ghislieri (as Pius V),

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 12–17, 64, 168.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 67–70.

had much in common with the *spirituali*: Their common characteristics included humanist education, a love of scholarship, a strong desire to reform the clergy and the church as a whole, a sense of the biblical and patristic patterns of the church, and personal friendships. In these matters the practical, reforming Cervini had much in common with practical reforming *spirituali* bishops such as Giberti, Boltani, and Cortese. Hudon argues that the differences between them lay in their different backgrounds, training, and experience. Thus "intransigence" was a matter of personal experience as much as it was a theological stance.²² Hudon's argument has extended the direction that research has been taking for some time, embracing complexities of behavior and placing *spirituali* and *intransigenti* close together in the spectrum of reformers, and further weakening the notion of the *spirituali* and *intransigenti* as two opposing fractions.

Nevertheless, Hudon's arguments have two potentially retrogressive effects on our understanding of Italian reformers. The first effect is to play down the significance of conflict and divisions amongst Italian reformers, almost returning to the old monolithic perception of "the reformers." Whatever the *spirituali* and *intransigenti* had in common, there is still evidence of self-conscious factional identity and deep conflict over the strategies and tactics of reform, and it is still necessary to take into account deep theological divisions over the concept of salvation. The differences and conflict between the two groups over substantial principles and conflict cannot be argued away quite so readily. The second effect may be to concentrate studies once more on reactions to Protestantism rather than than seeing reform-minded Catholics as part of a developing tradition of beliefs and attitudes partly independent of Protestantism.

The question is where are we to go from here? How can we acknowledge the similarities in practice of *spirituali* and *intransigenti* which depict them less in terms of their reactions to Protestantism, without diminishing the significance of their conflicts and divisions which largely arise from their different reactions to Protestantism.

One answer may lie in their sense of efficiency as shown by the studies of Hallman, Hudon, and others, in the pragmatic attitudes of Cervini and others, particularly their sense of good administrative planning and their emphasis on the efficient exercise of legitimately delegated authority at the papal, episcopal, and other levels of church government. It was this drive for efficiency that made the papacy so important to Catholic reformers. In practical terms, the continuing unity and the effective reform of the church re-

²² Ibid., pp. 30, 138, 169–173.

quired the primacy of the pope. Hudon suggests that support for papal *plenitudo potestatis* was supported for high minded reforming reasons, and that these reasons should be distinguished from those of Julius II, for example, who used papal authority to promote the political power of monarchical papacy. Both the *intransigenti* and the *spirituali*, notably Contarini and Pole, argues Hudon, looked to papal rather than conciliar initiatives for reform, and wanted reform to be carried out under the authority of papal bulls.²³ But underlying this common pragmatic approach to reform lay personalities whose cast of mind was to act pragmatically rather than through theological doctrines. Hudon's book has the merit of pushing us to include practical management skills and efficiency in our analyses — especially the cast of mind that seeks efficiency through accurate diagnosis of, and effective action for, problems. Definitions of reform must now seriously take into account the cast of mind and the skills required to exercise authority.

There is another possible way to acknowledge both the practical similarities and the theological differences of *spirituali* and *intransigenti* without defining them too much in terms of their reactions to Protestantism. Hudon (quoting Giovanni Morone) asserted that authority went hand in hand with a "quest for holiness, articulated with pastoral commitment";²⁴ but Hudon's study actually reveals very little of Cervini's quest for holiness. We may therefore ask how Cervini's predilection for order extended into his concept of holiness, whether, for example, his piety consisted primarily of orderly devotions centered on approved spiritual practices, with concomitant suppression of devotional disorder. To do this historians must look again at sixteenth-century concepts of "reform" and "reformer," now also including concepts of orderly and skilled devotions in Italy and indeed in Europe generally.

A third possibility is methodological: that historians examine Catholic reform movements from, let us say, 1480 to 1560, an historical segment of eighty years which would comprise the lifetime of one old person and the coming of the Reformation. This procedure would reveal the patterns of Catholic reform both before and after 1517. We could then examine the period after 1517, carefully distinguishing and temporarily separating out for purposes of analysis the overshadowing "gravitational pull" of the Reformation. By this means we could be assisted in assessing the mentality of the age of the Reformation, the personalities of people, and the persistence and sometimes the renewal of old ideas. In that setting we could then study the impacts of Protestant ideas and the reactions to those new ideas, and the ex-

²³ Ibid., pp. 71–74.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 91.

tent to which the Reformation influenced the world of Catholic reform movements.

With this method of analysis, definitions of reform will inevitably move outside national studies, to take into account comparisons with earlier developments in other parts of Europe. In England, a generation before Cervini, a similar cast of mind concerning worldly administrative efficiency was evident in Bishop Richard Fox, Secretary to Henry VII from 1486, and later Lord Privy Seal and Bishop successively of Exeter, Bath and Wells, Durham and Winchester. When, under Henry VIII, Fox was pushed into retirement in 1516, he founded Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and in 1517 published a remarkable translation of the Benedictine Rule for women which revealed clearly his recurring obsession with administrative efficiency, management skills, and "reformation." Fox in England and Cervini in Italy were both exponents of a broadly European phenomenon of emphasizing skills and the various arts of accomplishment which developed in Italy, France, and England though quite possibly elsewhere from the later fifteenth century. It would not be too much to speak of a marked development from about 1480 throughout Europe in attitudes, not only amongst those at the top but also at much lower levels of authority and accomplishment. There has been little detailed historical investigation of the conscious cultivation of skills, but this topic may be fruitful in providing a fresh look at the whole range of Catholic reform movements from 1480 until 1560. Since there were differences between the way Cervini and others applied their sense of skills and efficiency and the way Fox and others had done so half a century earlier, it should be possible to trace developments in skills of piety during those critical eighty years.

A fourth way we may compare *spirituali* and *intransigenti* is to note how, having linked efficiency with holiness, they applied both efficiency and holiness to the exercise of authority. Despite differences, their common concern with efficiency, and the cast of mind that sought the "efficacious exercise of authority" was common to those who sought reform of the church during the years from Richard Fox to Marcello Cervini and it is to be recognized as a hallmark of reformers before and after the Reformation. Just as in 1516 Richard Fox wrote for abbesses on management skills, so did Cervini and others later seek "the ecclesiological ideal of the efficient exercise of legitimately delegated authority." When Cervini ordered Bishop Vittore Soranzo of Bergamo to get on and actually "use the authority I gave you" in the investigation of alleged heresy in a Servite monastery, he wanted efficient action, without delay, carried out with clear thought. When authority is delegated the responsibility for its exercise must be accepted, and used with "efficiency, productivity and

effectiveness . . . [and] propriety," with "speed and decisiveness," carrying out duties and solving problems in a practical and efficient manner. For this reason, Cervini required a renewal of the episcopal office as much as Contarini and Giberti had worked for it, and he should therefore be seen at one with them in that ambition.²⁵

A fifth way historians may acknowledge the similarities and differences of the *spirituali* and *intransigenti* without tying them too closely to reactions to Protestantism is to look beyond their Christology and ecclesiology to other doctrines and practices and to set them in the context of the meanings of "reform," and programs of "reform" and the discourses. One such doctrine is that of the of the Holy Spirit, which was connected in some way with the administrative efficiency to which Hudon has drawn attention. It is this doctrine of the Holy Spirit that is revealed fleetingly but significantly in the surviving letters of Marguerite of Navarre and Vittoria Colonna. Although their writers were skilled in the pragmatic world of sixteenth-century French and Italian politics, these remaining five letters have little to say about a sense of efficiency as an aspect of reform. Instead, the letters allude to the potential of the workings of the Holy Spirit on the problems facing reformers during the first half of the 1540s. For them, writing about the workings of the Spirit was not a pious literary indulgence but a serious consideration of changes of attitude and morale upon which they now pinned their hopes. As few, and as brief and full of silences as they are, the letters provide clues that suggest other interpretations about Catholic reform during the sixteenth century. The ideas that they suggest are necessarily speculative because the letters express them in allusions and fragmentary themes, and in any case there are only five surviving letters. Consequently, although the two women were important figures within Catholic reform, their letters constitute only a very small basis from which the speculative hypothesis of this introduction rises like a kind of inverted pyramid: It is an idea that requires much more research to define and substantiate it.

This speculative hypothesis is that in various countries before the Reformation there developed a distinctive strand of Catholic reform based on the theology of the Spirit, which later developed during the 1520s and 1530s under the influence of the Reformation but not as a theological reaction to the Reformation. Pre-Reformation Catholics viewed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a solution to the problem of the lukewarm church, which had, they believed, needed reform in head, members, external structures, practices, or in its interior life. Their hope in the doctrine of the Spirit was thus a response

²⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

to disillusionment, and also a hope for implementing institutional reform. The much older view of the Spirit as illuminator of the soul and mind was amalgamated with more recent ideas of the Spirit as empowering rational skills, to make the Spirit an active and creative force on two levels: first as light or fire of the soul and second as the animator of human endeavours for the organization and reform of the church. Also, to a large extent the doctrine of the Spirit provided the answer to the dilemma of having to choose between heresy and obedience by shifting religious belief to another level, away from the vexatious problem of salvation, almost rising above the doctrinal controversies of the day. The letters of Vittoria and Marguerite cannot be understood merely in terms of the doctrinal controversies surrounding questions of sin and salvation, but must be seen in a wider sense — especially chronologically and theologically. When they are read as referring to the doctrine of the Spirit, the letters reveal a great deal more, not as conclusive evidence of the importance of the Spirit in Catholic reform but pointing to a discernible theme that needs to be investigated more thoroughly: This edition of their letters is a step in uncovering their doctrine of the Spirit.

The theology of the Spirit was at its clearest in France from the 1520s in the circles of Marguerite of Navarre, Guillaume Briçonnet, and others. During the late 1530s and 1540s the pattern of reform based on the theology of the Spirit travelled through transnational links between Catholic reformers from France into Italy, partly under the influence of Marguerite and Vittoria. In Italy it blended easily with an older and quite strong piety of devotions to the Spirit as had been expressed by, for example, Banco da Siena a century earlier. It was not fully formulated, and it always remained overshadowed and frequently sidetracked by questions of justification and obedience to Rome, but it is an element that may have shaped the nature of Catholic reform more than has been recognized.

The history of devotions to the Holy Spirit before and during the Reformation controversies have received comparatively little attention from western European theologians and historians. The work of the Spirit was acknowledged by the medieval scholastics but treated with reserve, so that in theological definition and in devotional practices the Spirit was channelled through the sacraments and to some extent through ancillary clerical actions such as blessings. Thus constrained and directed there was little surviving evidence about the experience of the Spirit amongst the laity, clergy, or even within the monastic life. Within routine orthodox *spirituality* as found at the parish and diocesan level there was some suspicion of direct experience and manifestations of the Spirit, because when it did occur it was generally associated with barely controllable enthusiasm and often found in heretical sects

and at places of political unrest, the most notorious example being that of Thomas Müntzer who believed that through his sufferings he was filled with the Spirit, which overrode all other authority—church or Bible—and the truly regenerate, infallible, and perfect had the right to reorder society, to reach perfection, cleansed of the ungodly, if necessary with violence.²⁶

It is not surprising, therefore, that historians and even contemporaries have followed the theologians and concentrated on the theological and administrative efforts of Catholic reformers to overcome abuses, corruptions, and deficiencies within the church, both before and after 1517, and have rarely examined developments in the Catholic doctrine of the Spirit which began to take place during the last decade of the fifteenth century and which gathered pace until about the middle of the 1520s, when the doctrine of the Spirit went into temporary decline. This decline left the field of Catholic reforming ideas and practices to the other facets of reform, which since then have held the historiographical high ground in Reformation studies.

The developing doctrine of the Spirit, from the late fifteenth century to the 1560s, needs to be reinserted into the history of the Reformation period. From well before the Reformation, Catholic reformers were encouraging notions of the Spirit as the way to breathe force into the sacramental system and to strengthen an ecclesiological sense of the church as a vehicle of the Spirit through which transformations of individuals as well as organizations and society as a whole could take place. This approach can be seen in Richard Fox, for whom the Spirit was a source of clear-eyed understanding, resolution, and skills to do what was needed to be done, in Thomas More for whom the Spirit was the witness and vehicle of God's providence, and in Bishop Briçonnet, for whom the Spirit blended grace and works. The letters of Marguerite of Navarre and Vittoria Colonna in 1540 and 1545 also show that they too considered the Spirit to be the necessary agent of personal and church reform, as a source of clear-eyed understanding, resolution, and skills, as the witness and vehicle of God's providence, as the unifier of grace and works, and as bringer of transformation.

This renewed doctrine of the Spirit was under way before Luther's Ninety-five theses, but after 1525 it was pushed to one side by the controversies and events of the Reformation, especially the practical questions and problems of removing abuses from the church and resolving the theological debates and

²⁶ Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer: Apocalyptic Mystic and Revolutionary*, trans. Jocelyn Jacquier, ed. Peter Matheson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), pp. 95–96, 123, 133, 143–144, 179. There is a perceptive review of this work by Euan Cameron, "Heroic Ideals and Hero-Worship," *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 1 (1997): 217–226.

divisions that were now hardening so rapidly. By 1540 it was apparent that although Rome's *De Ecclesia Emendanda* of 1537 might be a successful prelude to reform of abuses, the greatest difficulty the Roman Church faced was not to put an end to abuses, but to achieve theological reforms that could reconcile the theological differences between the Reformed church and Rome. This being the case, neither of the two paths of Catholic reform, accommodation and intransigence, would solve the problems confronting the Roman Church; something else was needed. Marguerite and Vittoria realized that Catholic reform needed a new direction, and that any new direction needed a strong openness to the workings of the Spirit as the initiator of new understanding and the inspirer of dedication.

These letters of Marguerite and Vittoria, written in 1540 and 1545, consist mainly of extended compliments, insistent modesty, expression of apprehension and some oblique references to the events and serious choices that were now intruding into their lives. Nevertheless, their recurrent references to the Spirit throw a flickering light on the reform movements of the *évangeliques* in France and the *spirituali* in Italy. The letters reveal the stirrings of an attempt in 1540 and 1545 to return to a style of reform that was already under way in 1517, by reviving the doctrines of the Spirit that had now fallen into neglect about twenty-five years earlier. We now know that neither they nor any others of their kind could engender momentum for a doctrine of the Spirit as they perceived it, and that from 1546, despite ambiguities in its formularies, the Council of Trent rolled over their efforts to revive the doctrine of the Spirit, almost entirely absorbing the Holy Spirit into its own new piety of reformed post-Tridentine Catholicism.

II

The Holy Spirit and Reform in the Western Church Before the Reformation

In the first chapter we suggested that historians might examine Catholic reform movements from 1480 to 1560 as a piece, identifying the “gravitational pull” of the Reformation’s dominating theological concern with Christology and doctrines of justification and their ramifications, and focus attention instead on the vocabulary of older but continuing discourses within which “reform” was defined and propounded. We also suggested that historians might study the increasing emphasis during the later fifteenth century on skills and on the various arts of accomplishment not only amongst those at the top but also at all levels of authority and ability. A closer study of reform-minded people who applied worldly skills of administrative efficiency to religious matters would cover the whole range of Catholic reforming attitudes, from the obsession of Richard Fox with “reformation” and accurate problem solving, to the somewhat different manifestations of the same cast of mind in the reforming efforts of Cervini during the 1550s. The combination of older but continuing discourses and the emphasis on the skills of piety may be applied to a study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a theological force in concepts of reform during the period of the Reformation. Because the Holy Spirit is a theme of these five letters, in order to place the letters in context it will be useful to summarize briefly some pertinent developments in the history of pneumatology, drawing out particular points that are relevant to the letters of Marguerite of Navarre and Vittoria Colonna.

The Christian doctrine of the Spirit was decisively shaped during sixty years of intense patristic controversy, beginning with the forceful writings of Arius during the 320s and his condemnation by the Council of Nicea in 325, and culminating in 381 with the Council of Constantinople. The disputes

arose first from teachings of the Arians, who did not acknowledge the full divinity of either Christ or the Holy Spirit, and later from the Pneumatomachi, who ascribed full divinity to Christ, but not to the Spirit. The controversy of those sixty years elicited a series of steps toward an explicit doctrine of consubstantial Trinity in which the three Persons of the Trinity were coequal. This intensely productive period of patristic scholarship defined fundamental doctrines of the Holy Spirit in writings and sermons, especially in those of Athanasius (296–373), who asserted the equal divinity of the Spirit with the Son in his *Letters on the Holy Spirit*. Throughout this period of definition one dominant motif was the power of the Spirit to cleanse, cure, and restore what is damaged or stunted in human development, in personal, social, and devotional ways.

At first the cleansing work of the Spirit had been seen as individualistic and internal. Early eastern monasticism had been based upon withdrawal from the world — partly for the sake of the world's salvation, but nevertheless withdrawal from it. The ascetic life had required abstinence from meat, wine, and sexual relations as a basis for the good works of prayer worship and acts of charity. During the late third century in northern Egypt the hermit St. Anthony had emphasized the element of ascetic withdrawal. In southern Egypt St. Pachomius had instituted in monastic houses a communal life of prayers, work, and meals under the guidance of a set of rules, a tradition retained by the Coptic Church. During the fourth century, Christians in Syria and Persia practiced communing with the Spirit in the hermitic tradition, alone in caves and on pillars.

Toward the end of the fourth century the Cappadocians linked together the Spirit, individual piety, and the communal life within the monastic community and in society in general. The monk sought to become the perfect Christian, whose transformation perfected human nature without denying or destroying it, a goal that was in fact the vocation of all Christians. Sanctification through the Spirit engendered love of others, the Spirit being the means of perfecting the individual soul, other people, and the communal condition of society as a whole. The close theological connection between the Spirit and the community implied social reform. The monastic buildings became the centers for this process. They were places in which the Spirit was manifest and they provided means for the Spirit's work. Amongst the monastic buildings were the local church, the bishop's residence, hospitals, hostels for the poor, other places for poor relief, and schools. Social well-being, and the social reform it implied, were both works of the Spirit.

The principal protagonist of the orthodox view asserting the divinity of the Holy Spirit was St. Basil. Despite the atmosphere of fierce controversy

and mutual condemnations, Basil did not require conformity to confessional statements. He was content to leave the nature of the Spirit in mystical and divine incomprehensibility, and instead concentrated on the actual operation of the Spirit. As others had done, Basil drew practical social and devotional conclusions from his theology of the Trinity. He emphasized inward faith and outward works nourished by the Spirit: He encouraged asceticism such as virginity or poverty, for example, but he was clear that such practices were exterior to the soul and not essential to salvation. Renunciation was not an end in itself but the product of loving faith in God. Thus he preached the necessity of giving to the poor almost to the point of a form of Christian communism; but such renunciation was not meritorious — rather it was the response of faith to the grace of salvation. His treatises on the Holy Spirit and on ascetic and moral teachings all pursued the same themes of the Spirit and good works of ascetic and moral behavior being closely linked. When Augustine formulated his Trinitarian doctrine in *De Fide et Symbolo*, he attributed to the Spirit the role of burning and cleansing the defects of our humanity. Writing on the Eucharist, with reference to Ambrose of Milan, Augustine asserted that “the Lord’s flesh, filled with the Holy Spirit, would burn away all the sins of our human condition.”²⁷ Similarly, Chrysostom (d. 407) wrote extensively on the Spirit, placing it within the context of grace by linking the Spirit, grace, and good works together in making the Church a community.²⁸

During the 1530s and 1540s, the significance of Basil’s works was apparent to the *spirituali*, who appreciated his careful adherence to the Bible in

²⁷ *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1995), Bk. 4, p. 259.

²⁸ *Letters of Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, trans. and ed. Cuthbert Richard Bowden Shapland (London: Epworth, 1951), vol. 1, p. 20; *Epistles to Serapion*, I, 28 (*Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 26, pp. 593, 596); III, 6 (*Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 26, p. 633), etc.; cf. Yves M. J. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3, *The River of the Water of Life (Revelation 22:1) Flows in the East and in the West*, trans. David Smith (from *Je Crois en l’Esprit Saint*) (New York and London: Seabury Press & Geoffrey Chapman, 1983; first published 1979), p. 82 (hereafter cited as *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*). For Augustine on the Spirit see *Patrologia Latina*, vol. IX, beginning of p. 18 and 19; pp. 40, 190–191; cf. Congar, op. cit. pp., 77–81. See also John Chrysostom, *De S. Pent. Hom.* 1, 4, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 50, pp. 458–459. Patristic sources generally relevant to sixteenth-century pre-Tridentine thinking, and to the history of the theology of the Spirit in the high Scholastic period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries receive detailed treatment in the publications of Karl Rahner (*Theological Investigations*, vol. 16, *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, trans. David Morland [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979]) and Congar. Both pinpoint a certain confusion in patristic writings about Catholic pneumatology. There is also the work of Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978). Henry Barclay Swete’s older but still valuable basic study of the pneumatology of the Fathers, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912) and the recent work of J. Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit* (Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, 1984).

constructing his teachings, his recognition that the mysteries of the soul and faith are not easily defined and that those who are uncertain or who appreciate the complexities of faith should not be pushed to make definitions, and his recognition that the church has its own kind of freedom with respect to political authority. They also appreciated his attack on unproductive expenditure (with its sixteenth-century parallels in simony, nepotism, and pluralism), and his concept of reform through the Spirit. In 1540, Adamo Fumano was well aware of all these points when he dedicated to Vittoria Colonna his translation from the Greek of Basil, *Divi Basili Magni . . . Moralia, Ascetica magna, Ascetica parva*.²⁹

To summarize, we may say that the Cappadocian period of patristic history had two prime characteristics that are significant for our speculative hypothesis about Catholic reform during the sixteenth century. First, the Cappadocians were strong protagonists of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Godhead in Christian doctrine and devotions. Second, they emphasized the priority of grace and the necessity of faith and good works of ascetics and morality in response to faith — teachings which in the sixteenth century had a distinctly “Protestant” ring to them. When the *spirituali* studied patristic writers during their various crises, they turned principally to writers of the Cappadocian period. It was from this narrow band of patristic writings that the *spirituali* and the *évangeliques* drew at least some of their beliefs on grace, justification and good works, and much of their doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The vigorous patristic formation of teaching on the Spirit was followed by a diminished but continuing thread of devotion centered on the Spirit, with conspicuous flowering of devotions from time to time. During the ninth century the anonymous *Veni Creator Spiritus* described the work of the Spirit in terms of the soul being flooded with light, understanding, and inspiration. The best English translation was made by John Cosin during the later seventeenth century.

Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart:

²⁹ *Divi Basili Magni . . . Moralia, Ascetica magna, Ascetica parva* (Lyons, France: “apud Sebastianum Gryphium,” 1540). The definitive Benedictine edition of Basil’s *Liber de Spiritu Sancto* was published in 1726. It reappeared in a valuable revision of the Greek text and with notes by Charles F. H. Johnston, *The Book of Saint Basil the Great Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia On the Holy Spirit, Written to Amphilocheius, Bishop of Iconium, against the Pneumatomachi* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892). For Johnston’s assessment of the controversy, see p. xiii.

Thy blessed unction from above
Is comfort life and fire of love;
Enable with perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight:

Anoint and cheer our soiled face
Wit the abundance of thy grace:
Keep far our foes, give peace at home;
Where thou art guide, no ill can come.³⁰

Although the devotional literature of the earlier medieval period is sometimes intense, and at times tender, in its exposition of the indwelling Spirit, the theological expositions generally ascribed a strong but indirect role to the Spirit, describing it as an illuminator, comforter, Spirit of Truth, defender, mediator and convincer of sin, validator of holiness rather than a direct agent of transformation. Odo of Cluny (879–942) and Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) argued that the Spirit, as the third person of the Trinity, has a role in salvation, but the teaching was not fully developed by others.³¹ Thomas Aquinas treated the topic of revelation without elaborate discussion of the Spirit, though he treated the Spirit extensively elsewhere.³² The reasons for this comparative neglect are not clear, but they may include vagueness about the notion of the Spirit, or perhaps the dominant Hellenic modes of thought in Christendom pushed out the Hebraic pneumatological concept. Exposition of the Spirit may have been constrained by the Filioque debate between the Eastern and Western Churches, and on another level, the clergy may have been apprehensive of lay emphasis on the Spirit and exaggerated claims of inspiration.³³

There is a striking example of this secondary role of the Spirit in a Norman commentary of the early eleventh century on the Pauline letters to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians which has recently appeared in a critical edition.³⁴ The monastic commentary consistently uses the Spirit merely as an ad-

³⁰ The translations of the *Veni, Creator Spiritus* and the Golden sequence are both taken from the *English Hymnal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906).

³¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)*, p. 131.

³² Burns and Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, vol. 3, see introduction; see also Yves M. J. Congar, "The Holy Spirit in the 'Economy,'" in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 1 (New York: Seabury Press, 1983); for comments on revelation and the experience of the Spirit, see p. 53.

³³ Dietrich Ritschl "The History of the Filioque Controversy," *Concilium*, vol. 128 (1979): pp. 3–14; Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946), pp. 3–4.

³⁴ Gérard de Martel, ed., *Expositiones Pauli Epistolarum ad Romanos, Galathas et Ephesias e codice Sancti Michaelis in periculo Maris* (Avranches Bibl. mun. 79), OSB (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1995).

junct to the saving grace of Christ and the human response of faith. The writer asserts that hope and love shall fill the heart, not as a result of human effort, but because these attributes are flooded into the heart by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Yet, when it deals with Romans 8:2 the commentary gives virtually no active role to the Spirit. Instead, the liberation from sin and death is almost entirely Christocentric. Similarly, the gloss on Romans 8:5 explains the Spirit simply as an indicator of faith, "For we live by the Spirit, that is we live by faith, seeking not the things of this world but things eternal." The failure to possess the Spirit, referred to in Romans 8:8-9, is glossed as "non est Christi quia non adhaeret Christo," and the following verses, 10-17, "possession of the Spirit" is little more than a term that can be applied to those who "have in ourselves wisdom, justice, peace, love, charity," and are "by adoption children of Christ."

There was another vigorous resurgence of interest in the Holy Spirit and Pentecost at the end of the eleventh century and during the twelfth century, including a remarkable teaching of Pope Urban II (1088-1099). Urban II made a distinction between public law and a kind of private law in the heart as an understanding of what is right imparted by the instinct of the Holy Spirit (*instinctu Spiritus Sancti*). Urban pressed the point further to argue that when the Spirit of the Lord resides in the heart, the Spirit gives freedom from prescriptions of the publicly stated law and from its authority, even ecclesiastical authority. This application of the doctrine of the Spirit bears some resemblance to the doctrine of intention expressed by Eloise, abbess of the convent of the Paraclete, in her correspondence with Peter Abelard during the 1130s. Dedications to the Holy Spirit of churches, hospitals, hospices, and communities in France, England, the German lands, and Italy became common during the twelfth century, and included Abelard's convent of the Paraclete of which Heloise was abbess. Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179) also reflected a sense of the Spirit as a source of counsel, advice, warnings, spontaneous preaching, and other prophetic interventions in the life of the church, especially interventions by women, with the Spirit enabling those who were touched by its fire to reach "a deep understanding of the truth." Yves Congar attributed this revival of interest in the Holy Spirit to contemporary concerns for the brotherhood of man and human society which naturally called upon the Spirit to inspire understanding and desire for charity and reform.³⁵

During the later thirteenth century, Urban's doctrine of *instinctu Spiritus Sancti* and the private law of the heart were frequently used by Aquinas in the

³⁵ Yves M. J. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 1, especially pp. 110-111.

Summa. Aquinas systematized the distinction between the gifts and the virtues of the Spirit. The gifts were a disposition to be open to the Spirit and thereby to be open to powers greater than normally human. As a result of that openness to the action of the Spirit, human beings could acquire the virtues of the Spirit that united mankind to God. This neat distinction between openness toward the Spirit and the acquisition of its virtues, so similar to our human experiences of the distinction between being open to friendship and love, and acquiring the actual gifts of friendship and love, made the progress of personal reform through the Spirit less a matter of confrontation and conversion, and more a matter of patient opening up of self to new influences and transformation. The obvious channel by which people could make themselves open were the sacraments. During the thirteenth century there was great emphasis on the operation of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments — not least by Aquinas, who expounded this in his theological treatises and in his hymns.

Aquinas's distinction between the self being opened up by love to the influences of love, and love when received imparting gifts to the receptive person, carried the inevitable corollary that the Spirit could and did intervene in human lives, not externally in making miracles but inwardly to transform the soul. This idea was clearly expressed in the thirteenth century sequence to the ninth century *Veni, Creator Spiritus*. The sequence *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, sometimes known as the "Golden Sequence" was added most probably by Stephen Langton (1150–1228), Archbishop of Canterbury, a political prelate involved in the framing of Magna Carta and a biblical theologian and ecclesiastical reformer. Langton's Sequence went beyond the message of the original hymn that the power of the Spirit poured love and light into souls, to write movingly of the power of the Spirit to intervene actively to transform social and personal circumstances. His verses describe the Spirit as "father of the poor," bringing sweet freshness to attitudes, washing away the baggage of uncleanness, watering whatever is arid in human beings, healing what is raw or wounded. The Spirit here is very much more than illuminator: It is the active agent of healing, re-creation and re-formation. In this short hymn of great intensity Langton caught the depth of what is wounded in the human condition and what is needed. The words are such that everyone who sang them must have been able to apply their message to their own lives and to have invoked the healing work of the Spirit. The eighth verse of the Sequence most strongly expresses this active intervention of the Spirit: The best translation into English remains that of the Tractarian John M. Neale, who captures the precision, elegance, and rich tenderness of the original:

What is soiled, make thou pure;
What is wounded, work its cure;

What is parchèd, fructify;
 What is rigid gently bend;
 What is frozen, warmly tend;
 Straighten what goes erringly.³⁶

Langton's contemporary was Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202) a Calabrian abbot, one of those prophets who from time to time perceive a new dawn arising. He preached a new age of the Spirit, especially for monks, contemplatives, and others who also lived in the Spirit. Joachim's teaching described three ages of religion; the era of the Father dominated by the letter of the Old Testament; the era of the Son dominated by the letter of the New Testament; and finally, about to arise as the thirteenth century approached, a new era, one no longer dominated by biblical literal texts, but purely an era of the Spirit in which God would speak to mankind directly through the Spirit, and by this means bring about renewal—which frequently included political renewal. The forthcoming renewal of both the church and the world was nearly always expressed in eschatological and apocalyptic terms. Joachim's views on the Spirit had enormous influence throughout Europe, especially within the Franciscan order.

It is worth noting another effort to bring about simultaneously institutional and personal spiritual and theological renovation. From 1439 to 1445 the Council of Ferrara-Florence attempted a twofold reform of both the Western and Eastern Church, *pietas e doctrina*, largely under the influence of humanist scholars of Greek, such as Bessarion and Guarino da Verona. The Council's prime institutional reform was a partial reunion of the Western Church of Rome with the Eastern Orthodox through the resolution of their long standing dispute over the Filioque clause. The Council eventually reasserted that the Son was begotten of the Father and then the Spirit was begotten of both, and that the Trinity was three distinct persons, one God, wholly within each other without losing their distinction. The Spirit's place within the Trinity — at the heart of the theological dispute between the Eastern and Western Churches — and the Council's deliberations on these doctrinal differences, are set out in the *Acta* of the Council and in Bessarion's speeches and writings. The Council also deliberated on the Spirit in order to pursue the reform of piety within the church, emphasizing monastic and lay devotions of the restoration of the image of God, using language applicable to monastics to the laity. The deliberations of the Council concerning this notion of reform through the Spirit rested heavily upon Greek patristic writings, the influence of which is most evident in Bessarion's address on the Holy Spirit and the

³⁶ *The English Hymnal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906).

union of eastern and western Christianity, and in his translation of the third book of *De Spiritu Sancto* of St. Basil which deals with the themes of sanctification and transformation through the Spirit.

The Council's debates and definitions only partially healed the split between the East and the West. Because its deliberations centered on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, however, the Council rekindled western interest in the doctrine of the Spirit, especially by its long and vigorous discussion of Augustine's teaching that the Spirit is generated by — in fact is — the love between the Father and the Son. A little before the Council, but much more after it, there was renewed emphasis on the older idea of Spirit being an affective force, inflaming the individual soul. The well-known hymn of Banco da Siena, *Discendi Amor Santo*, emphasizes personal unworthiness and the coming of the Spirit to purge, to illuminate, and to bring the heat of fiery love and zeal to the sinner. During the later fifteenth century, the Spirit provided a great deal of common ground for both the monastic and the lay life, emphasizing personal reform, especially when those who invoked the Holy Spirit joined together with others in conventual life, or in lay confraternities, guilds, or in processions, though even in groups the fervent invokers of the Holy Spirit still remained individuals in whose own soul occurred the changes wrought by the fiery Spirit. The failure of the Council of Ferrara-Florence meant that the question of union with the Greeks remained in the background of western Catholic thought until the 1520s. It was obscured even further by the more intrusive matter of the Protestant schism. However, awareness of the Spirit and personal and communal reform, which the Council had heightened, still remained.³⁷

This notion of personal reform through the Spirit was quite distinct from the other contemporary notion that reform of the whole church was best achieved through institutional corrections of abuses, notably pluralism, simony, and nepotism, first by institutional and behavioral changes in the "head," which would be followed naturally by reform at the lower institutional levels, and finally by the individual "members" following the influence of example and precept trickling down from above. This notion of institutional reform was a reaction to expressions of dissatisfaction and discontent with institutional structures and performances, but it is doubtful whether it

³⁷ For humanists and the reform of piety, see Stefano Prandi "L'attesa della 'Reformatio' nella cultura umanistica del primo quattrocento: alcune testimonianze," in *Ferrara e il Concilio 1438–1439*, Atti del Convegno di Studi nel 550 Anniversario del Concilio dell'unione delle due Chiese d'oriente e d'occidente, ed. Patrizia Castelli (Ferrara, Italy: Università Degli Studi, 1992), pp. 85–93. For the survival of hopes of union into the next century see Adriano Prosperi, "Le istituzioni ecclesiastiche e le idee religiose," in *Il Rinascimento nelle corti padane. Società e cultura*, *Atti del convegno Società e cultura al tempo di Ludovico Ariosto* (Bari, Italy: Laterza, 1977), p. 154ff.

could have ever satisfied the complexities of that discontent which was rarely purely institutional in nature but generally had strong undertones of spiritual dissatisfaction. Consequently, the definition of discontent and its relationship to movements for reform is at the heart of any attempt to understand reforming movements, whether political or religious. It is, for example, crucial to the debate on the Reformation in England between those who hold to the older notion that the pre-Reformation church was inadequate and there was widespread discontent and desire for radical reforms, and their revisionist opponents who argue that the church was in a healthy condition and that its shortcomings and the discontent of the laity has been exaggerated by both polemicists and historians. The same questions are being asked, *mutatis mutandis*, of other countries and cultures in western Europe, and the same two convincing sides of the debate seem to be present. Historians who seek to define the reform movements of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries may find it fruitful to define more closely the dissatisfaction and discontent that fuelled the various desires for reform in Europe. It is, however, a task more difficult than appears on the surface because there seems to lie within pre-Reformation piety the paradox of simultaneous contentment and discontent with the church.

We may identify antagonism toward the Church of Rome's wealth and power, towards its spiritual head who behaved as a European political power, toward wealthy cardinals and other prelates, towards church courts that were sometimes seen to be cumbersome or partial, and toward authoritarian clergy. It is much more difficult to identify spiritual discontent arising from personal needs. Hungers were not met or were deflected by processes of piety such as holy communion, blessings, confession or pilgrimages, with such dissatisfaction often being allied to strong scepticism about the processes of piety, above all the difficulty of relating the spiritual world to the material places, objects, and actions of the church. In pre-Reformation England accounts of investigations for heresy before the Reformation reveal something of how the unsatisfied needs of individuals focused on the blending of the material with spiritual properties, such as the status of a priest or the eucharistic wafer or a pilgrimage site. The alleged heretics expressed, often in lively language, a certain dissatisfaction with religious practices which amounts not so much to discontent as to a sense that spiritual hunger required more than prevailing practices provided, and in consequence they voiced scepticism about the church's pattern of piety. Subversive religious utterances that expressed discontent with the clergy were not necessarily expressions of hostility to the clergy. Such utterances may, upon closer inspection, prove to have been a frustrated lack of depth, understanding, and fulfillment.

For example, pre-Reformation heresy trials in the diocese of Winchester, still unpublished, include the confession of William Wikham alias William Bruar (Beward), a man who enjoyed “the company of other heretics and lolars” in London and the west country. He confessed that he had

held and spoken and believed . . . that the host consecrate by the priest is not the body of criste in the form of bread but it is oonly a cake and a piece of bread and a thing done oonly in the memory of the passion of chreste and naught else and that the priest cannot make god for god make the priest . . . that the image in the church was nothing but very stoffe wherefore men should not go on pilgrimage nor do no offering to them but give their offering to the poor people which be the image of god . . . god ascended into heaven . . . where thou good lorde art in heaven and art to come thence to redde both quick and dead then thou art not here in earth in flesh and blood on the altar in form of bread for thou will not be at noe showing of thee but thou wilt be eatyn with hering of erys [hearing of ears].³⁸

The ostensible subjects of Bruar’s complaint were the clergy and the services, but the underlying discontent was also with the gap between the material and the spiritual world which he could not bridge. The gap between eating a piece of bread and the feeding of his soul was too much. He knew that his search for understanding needed another kind of eating, the feeding of his soul by a meal of sermons, “eaten with the hearing of ears.” Bruar could have simply put aside concerns about the feeding of his soul, in which case he could also have kept quiet about the “cake and a piece of bread” on the altar, but the feeding of his soul was important and therefore he could not keep silent about what he found to be a useless bit of bread. He rejected the eucharistic bread, not because he scorned the church’s teaching but because the bread was not able to bridge the gulf between the material and spiritual worlds. For Bruar, reform would have to involve some sort of explanation of the relationship between the material world and the Spirit that quickened it. In the end, reform had to be a spiritual movement. If Bruar’s soul were to be quickened it was far more likely to be by sermons and by God the Spirit than by the consecrated host on the altar.

As we have seen, there was a long-standing belief that the church was in need of reform, and recurring attempts at institutional and administrative reform, generally linked with better education, and based on the head and members, or trickle down, paradigm, with reformation moving from the re-

³⁸ Register of Bishop Fox, vol. 3 (1511–1515), 75v–76r, Hampshire Record Office, 21M65 A1/19.

formed institution to the people below. During the conciliar epoch and the middle and later years of the fifteenth century there had been several attempts at institutional reform along these lines, most of which lost impetus. During the period immediately before the Reformation other reforming movements failed, amounting to little more than well-intentioned declarations and bureaucratic shuffling until matters settled down again to their old state. Many attempts at reform even lost their impetus whilst still in progress, as with the proceedings of the Gallican Council of Pisa 1511–1512 which were so obviously sterile that Abbot Briçonnet walked out of the final sessions. Those who desired reform became disillusioned with the failures of attempts to change the church through administrative and institutional means. What they saw as an unassailable sterility, the lack of sensitivity, a dry soul-sickness convinced ardent spirits that reform required more than study and reorganization of the clergy to encourage virtuous behavior. The dissatisfactions of clergy such as Briçonnet, and some of the laity focused on some kind of further motivation by the Spirit, based on the idea that the working of the Holy Spirit could engender reformation and satisfy personal spiritual hunger at all levels.

This revived notion that the Holy Spirit would inspire reform and, indeed, was necessary to reform, led its protagonists in two directions that were quite different but complementary: toward Neoplatonism and towards skills of piety. To these we now turn.

The Neoplatonists, despite their generally inflated use of language, quite precisely defined the Spirit as an effective instrument of change and reform within the late medieval pattern of reform. The invocation of the Holy Spirit was to sharpen the distinction between the material world and the higher spiritual world. The soul, which is a spirit, would then be charged with a heightened consciousness, and rise above the material world of its own body and circumstance to the higher world of unchanging realities of the knowledge of God. As they mounted heavenwards, souls would communicate with others to their mutual illumination, understanding and zeal. It was an idealistic view of the perfecting of the church, but it was a persuasive idea and one that helped overcome the restrictions and dissatisfactions of the Church Militant by focusing and intensifying the yearning for spiritual fulfillment, and by encouraging ideals and practices of asceticism as a means to salvation through gradations of spirituality. This ascent piety and its theological basis were both decisively rejected by Martin Luther and the Reformers, and Neoplatonism was part of the late-medieval piety against which the Reformation was a reaction.

On the other hand, Neoplatonist ideas were part of the explanation for the

popularity, or at least the seriousness, with which Luther's teachings were received. The asceticism and spiritually hierarchical attainments of Neoplatonism were applicable as much to the laity as to the clergy and to monastics. Laymen and laywomen could also climb the devotional heights toward heaven, and in that sense were equal to the clergy. Such ideas militated against notions that the latter were a spiritually superior caste. On the other hand, any failure of the clergy to disentangle from the material world and to rise to spiritual heights of other-worldliness was in Neoplatonist terms a convincing sign of inadequacy in those who were by their vocation committed to such disentanglement. Thus the Neoplatonist concept of reform elevated the clergy such as Ochino and other Capuchins who had most obviously risen to unworldly spiritual heights, yet simultaneously diminished the reputation of the greater number of clergy and monastics who did not. Neoplatonist ideas thus encouraged the concept of a spiritual elite, but also placed that concept under great strain. This indeed is part of the answer to the question why the ascetic ideal was so attractive during the same time that Protestant ideas were spreading — a question to which we return later.³⁹

When John Colet, the future dean of St. Paul's cathedral in London, had encountered the ideas of Pico della Mirandola in Italy, he adopted Neoplatonist ideas. Eventually, Colet moved to a more Pauline and Augustinian view of grace and faith, but during his Neoplatonist phase he stressed the need to rise above the material obstacles of the human condition. This view fitted in with his personal reservations about the sexual and other intimacies of marriage, which reservations helped achieve for him the epithet "the gloomy Dean." For Colet, as for all Neoplatonists, the Spirit was invoked to illuminate the human soul, to give a burning desire for God, and to give understanding that beyond the material world, including the human body, lay a higher world and spiritual fulfillment. The Spirit would bring a greater consciousness of higher and unchanging realities, but in the end it was the will which had to respond to that illumination and reach for the heights of the knowledge of God.⁴⁰ In the Neoplatonist scheme of salvation, the Spirit was invoked to assist the process with its tongues of fire which gave zeal and understanding; but the Spirit's function was auxiliary to the process of with-

³⁹ The question was asked by Elisabeth G. Gleason in "The Capuchin Order in the Sixteenth Century," in *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation. In Honor of John C. Olin on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Richard L. DeMolen (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994), pp. 31–67. Hereafter cited as *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation*.

⁴⁰ The definitive work on Colet is that of John B. Gleason, *John Colet* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1989). Colet's theological teaching with relation to the Spirit is on pp. 161–203, but note especially the efficient cast of mind in the interpretation and application of God's word (p. 177), and also the telling point of Colet's existentially lonely universe.

drawal from the world. Thus for Neoplatonists, the Spirit guided and strengthened individual fulfillment and in some ways bypassed the processes of the church's pattern of piety. Neoplatonism required such a dedication to unworldliness that even with its regard for the Spirit, one cannot imagine it appealing to the likes of the Lollard William Bruar whose discontent was not due to a disdain for worldliness but due to a lack of meaningful connection between the material world and the life of the Spirit.

The stimulus given by the Council of Florence and Ferrara to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the recurrent though unsuccessful efforts of head and members institutional reform, and the Neoplatonist ideas of personal development through ambitious asceticism, all combined to transform the role of Spirit during the later years of the fifteenth century. The Spirit became a more pragmatic kind of illumination of the faithful, giving understanding of the practical skills of piety and of how to live the religious life. This was a cast of mind that emphasized rationality, analysis of sin and its problems, and intelligence strengthened by the Spirit, all giving skills to the work of renewal. This new cast of mind used its own vocabulary of "reformation" with exhortations to human effort which often gave it the appearance of being semi-Pelagian. Yet it was not semi-Pelagian in the sense of earning of salvation by the acquisition of merit. On the contrary, its economy of salvation was frequently Pauline and Augustinian. It was rather a piety orientated toward a sense of method and efficiency in the human work of improvements, employing the Spirit rationality and skills through which deficiencies were analyzed and "reformation" was conceived, planned, and effected.

The new emphasis on the skills of piety, personal reformation, and the Spirit had secular as much as religious roots. There were, for example, from the end of the 1400s, in parts of Europe, but most strikingly in Italy and England, numerous published writings on the exercise of authority and do-it-yourself titles on self-improvement. These advocated new and skillful attitudes to the exercise of authority, sometimes dealing with relatively lowly positions of authority as well as matters of state. The rise of this genre, made possible by the development of printing, reflected changes in government and administration in those countries. This new genre of writings on authority was much less moralistic and idealistic than the older "Mirror for Princes" genre, and much less rhetorical. There was little talk of justice or mercy in the abstract, few prescriptive moral ideals, sparse reference to utopian morality. Instead it was asserted that power entailed moral responsibilities to maintain law, order, political stability, and to reduce discontent, to which end there was an emphasis on the skills of analysis, understanding, and effective action. The obvious example is the political writing of Machiavelli, though he also

may be called moralistic in his pursuit of political stability. Certainly Machiavelli shared with his more religious contemporaries the same approach to analysis, skills, and action. With that emphasis came a conscious and deliberate emphasis on reformation — indeed, the word “reformation” began to pass much more frequently and freely into English usage from the late 1490s, and amongst some groups of church administrators it was used in almost every pertinent document.

The intellectual origins of this change from idealistic political morality to politically efficient civic morality lay in the combination of the methodical rationality and logic of the scholastic style with Italian civic humanism, especially the kind taught by Guarino da Verona, his son, and their humanist colleagues at the University of Ferrara. For nearly a century students at Ferrara — including English students, many of whom went on to senior positions in England — encountered Guarino’s notion that the *studia humanitatis* was a training ground for personal and political competence. His ideas were accepted and encouraged by those in government in Italian cities, by the Tudor regime in England, and by those who wrote about politics, most of whom, not surprisingly, were themselves humanist educated and experienced in politics or administration. When Erasmus made his famous comment early in the new century that a new age was dawning, he was not merely saying that a new era of humanist education was about to engender new attitudes and new ideas for a better world. It was rather the other way around. Ideas and attitudes, especially the perception of the need to improve and reform society and to govern it well — these demands required the practical benefits of education. The changes that occurred with humanist studies were stimulated by the shining light of *studia humanitatis*, but were also driven by political and administrative circumstances, aided by printing presses, and stimulated by international traffic in people and ideas. The *studia humanitatis* were not the benefactors but the handmaids of the new age that Erasmus perceived.

This new scholastic and humanist based cast of mind, took a rational, analytic, practical, and often historical attitude toward the exercise of authority, interested not only in the moral or idealistic standards of what ought to be done, but also how things actually get done. The phenomenon is common enough in the works of historians of the period, whose writings serve as more secular examples of what was going on amongst the more pious. In contrast to many medieval chronicles, most Renaissance historians wrote history as an explanatory account of human problems and achievements, drawing lessons from history. Thus, Machiavelli combined what Bacon called “his long experience of modern events and a constant study of the past,” using both to describe how things happened and why. Those same attitudes can be seen in

Italian commentators, evident a little in Savonarola but much more in Machiavelli and Guicciardini whose concerns for efficiency provide striking but hardly pious examples.

Besides the *studia humanitatis*, the new cast of mind had another matrix in Italian polity and experience. The misfortunes of Italy from 1492 and especially 1494, with turmoil, uncertainty, and rapid change, undermined Italian humanist optimism and led Guicciardini to concentrate on human activity to ameliorate things.⁴¹ It is not that there is a decline of humanist optimism but rather "a world in which the individual strives to assert influence"⁴² against the frustrations inherent in the world, so that prudence was a principal virtue. Some historians have attributed Machiavelli's new realism to his analysis of the decline and fall of the republic between 1494 and 1512, in particular to the political mistakes made by the chief magistrate, Piero Soderini. Others attribute it to his reaction to the character of the new Medici regime, and the election of Giovanni d'Medici as Pope Leo X in 1513.⁴³ Machiavelli's fellow Italian and contemporary, Polydore Vergil did the same thing in his own way. During the early seventeenth century the attitude is clear in the writings of Francis Bacon, trying "to carry the mind back into the past . . . faithfully to report . . . the revolutions of time [and] the character of persons."⁴⁴ There was an even earlier precursor of these ideas and practices of conscious efficiency in England, during the 1460s when John Tiptoft brought back from Italy ideas on efficient government which he put into effect with such brutality that he himself was executed when the political tide changed.

John N. Stephens, in his discussion of the intellectual origins of *The Prince*, summarizes a more general climate of efficiency as a blend of conventional Aristotelian political wisdom, conventional Petrarchan lament on the decline of Italy from its classical glory, the "merchant morality" which appreciated reason, prudence, and experience, and a few cynical observations by Italian diplomatists. Stephens also refers briefly to "the coming to prominence at that time of a certain sort of public servant with a distinctive outlook."⁴⁵

⁴¹ Salvatore di Maria, "Divine Order, Fate, Fortune and Human Action in Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*," *Forum Italicum* 28, no. 1 (spring 1994): 22-40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴³ R. Pesman Cooper, "Machiavelli, Piero Soderini and *Il Principe*," in *A Volume of Italian Renaissance Studies*, ed. C. Condon and R. Pesman Cooper (Sydney, Australia: Fredrick May Foundation for Italian Studies, 1982), pp. 119-144; John N. Stephens, "Machiavelli's *Prince* and the Florentine Revolution of 1512," *Italian Studies* 41 (1986): 45-61. Stephens has a summary of the earlier historiography.

⁴⁴ Francis Bacon, *The Historie of the Raigne of King Henry VII* (London, 1622; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996). In the autumn of 1621 Bacon presented King James with a manuscript copy, now in the British Library. Hereafter cited as *The Historie*.

⁴⁵ Stephens, "Machiavelli's *Prince*," p. 36.

Stephens's final point deserves more attention, for during the later fifteenth century — apart from conventional Aristotelian, Petrarchan nostalgia, and "merchant morality" — particular people in governing circles frequently attempted to develop clear-eyed understanding, analysis, and effective causes. There was a generalized striving for efficiency in the exercise of authority which became focused and developed on various particular circumstances. The new cast of mind was encouraged by political and administrative centralization, facilitated by the greater numbers of university graduates, especially in law, and by printing which put these ideas into concrete form and disseminated them.

In England a number of prominent public servants under Henry VII could certainly be described as "a certain sort of public servant with a distinctive outlook." One clear example was Richard Fox, the priest-secretary who was with Henry in exile in France, negotiated with the French government for them to support the invasion plans, was at Bosworth in 1485, and later became Lord Privy Seal and bishop successively of Exeter, Bath and Wells, Durham, and Winchester. He was a patron of humanist education and founder of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. A number of his protégés took law degrees at the University of Ferrara and were subsequently involved in developments in Tudor government and administration.⁴⁶ Fox was an excellent administrator, an example of the governing skills of the ruling elite of England. He was also a priest of considerable depth of piety. Bacon called him "a wise man and one that could see through the present to the future" with clear-eyed and realistic analysis of problems, the skill of long-sightedness and the value of skilled counselling and human perceptions.⁴⁷

As Fox grew older, his letters reflected more deliberately on the qualities to be desired in those who exercise authority. His ideas resemble the tradition of literature on the moral obligations of princes, but were different in two respects. First, he did not abstract his ideas and set them down in literary form. He was an executive, accustomed to confronting problems, making decisions, and getting things done. Therefore his ideas were woven in amongst practical working instructions. Second, he placed enormous emphasis on clarity of thought rather than morality in those who exercise authority: Good, effective, and moral government resulted not simply from moral choice, but also from a clear-eyed and rational understanding of particular sit-

⁴⁶ Barry Collett, "British Students at the University of Ferrara, 1480–1540," in *Filosofia, scienze e cultura alla corte degli Estensi: lo Studio de Ferrara nei secoli XV e XVI*, Proceedings of the Commemoration of the 600th Anniversary of the University of Ferrara in March 1992, ed. M. Bertozzi (Ferrara, Italy: Università degli Studi di Ferrara, 1994), pp. 125–146.

⁴⁷ Bacon, *The Historie*, 1971 edition, 49, 177.

uations followed by effective action. This applied both to the individual's personal affairs, and to the exercising of authority within an organization.

In 1517 Fox published a small book entitled *Here begynneth the Rule of seynt Benet*. Written at the request of abbesses in the diocese of Winchester, it is a translation of the Benedictine Rule into English "oure moders tonge, comune, playne, round englisshe," also turning masculine words and terms into feminine equivalents. His translation was very free and the sparse Latin text was embellished with many illustrative phrases and additional passages dealing with the obstacles to piety in poor leadership, lack of clear and detailed knowledge about the task in hand, troublesome behavior arising from aggressive egocentricity and lack of diligence. Fox's treatment of those problems demonstrates his strong interest in the complexity and uncertainty in the problems of piety and reform. Fox adduced education, knowledge, organization, and planning as a basis for analysis and action on the part of all people, but he also emphasized personality and leadership skills. "The abbess shall not be full of hastiness, troubelous, nor of sour mood, or displayant countenance, she shall not be importune, or intolerable nor obstinate, not self-willed, she shall not be entangled with jealousy, nor be too much suspicious, for such a person is never in quietness, nor never takes rest."⁴⁸ Other interpolations described how pride creates emotional turbulence so that people are "troubled, vexed, grieved or made angry." The sin of pride and its impact was a commonplace theme in all teachings on piety, but what Fox did was to use this monastic treatise to locate that theme in the context of worldly efficiency and in the art of "good governance." At the heart of piety is "diligence," by which Fox meant careful, structured orderly effort. The pursuit of piety which was to be lived in an orderly and workman-like way, a point driven home by the insertion of his own introduction into the beginning of chapter four: "Like as all worldly artificers have material instruments apt for the accomplishment of their worldly works, in likewise there be instruments spiritual for the craft of religious living . . . directed, composed and ordered . . ."⁴⁹

But where did such an apostle of efficiency stand on morality? Machiavelli, speaking of political success, and Bishop Fox speaking of piety, both held that moral actions have to be grounded in the clear-eyed perception of reality. Erasmus had indicated something of this sort in *Praise of Folly*, in which he satirized human follies based on self-deception, but in the case of Fox it is the considered moral position of a shrewd and experienced senior administrator, that what is, is, and must be known. Yet Fox is different from Machiavelli.

⁴⁸ Richard Fox, *Here begynneth the Rule of Seynt Benet* (London: R. Pynson, 1517), fol. G.iii.r..

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. B.iii.r.

His moral views incorporate a sense of personal development (which is explicit only in Machiavelli's *Discourses* and is absent from the *Prince*). For Fox the qualities of good leadership are essential not only in the leader but also disseminated widely throughout the group, or society, and they include progress in the moral qualities of controlling pride, which is necessary for harmony, and behaving with integrity, which is necessary for trust and cooperation. "Use no simulation or dissimulation" he wrote "nor give no Judas kiss . . . when you make any peace or agreement (lovedaye)." "When you speak, you speak the truth all way both with heart and mouth."⁵⁰ Similarly, he wrote at length of another element of morality — courtesy — which enables smooth and efficient organization. Only the habit of courtesy can avoid the "dissensions and debates, malices, grievances and grudges, the which be wont often times to spring," thus damaging with personal quarrels the functioning of the corporate body, the body politic. With Fox, morality is almost "good order and decency," harmony and efficiency, and knowledge, perception, order, method, that is, an almost secular morality was linked with religion.

The combination of human complexities and the need for skills was not new. Some medieval chronicles relied heavily on miracles, exaggeration, and even fantasies to explain the ways of God (Polydore Vergil described Geoffrey of Monmouth as "more a poet than a historian"), ignoring the complexities and developments of human affairs or playing them down as something *sub specie aeternitatis*, pointing the way to heaven. Yet there were others, in the tradition of Augustine, the Venerable Bede, and Aquinas who combined a sense of divine purpose with the complexities of problems and development in human affairs. It was within this tradition that fifteenth-century Catholic reform looked first to intense personal piety and idealistic moralizing to achieve the institutional reform of head and members. But later in the century, during the 1490s, seeing that the complexity of problems were such that reformation of personal piety also required social skills, the Spirit was held to be a necessary and efficient agent of reform. The activist and methodical piety of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries thus employed the Holy Spirit differently from that earlier period in which the Spirit was invoked to bring its flames of burning zeal to cleanse and heal.

This doctrine was also taught by Dominican Thomists and particularly by Franciscans influenced by Joachimite ideas. During the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there appear to have been many prophecies of great tribulation, the scourging of the world for its sins and for the *renovatio mundi*, or even the end of the world. It was a time of sensitivity to the doctrine of the

⁵⁰ Ibid., fol. B.iv.r.

Spirit — much of it in the Joachimite vein, stimulated by several editions of the works of Joachim published in Venice between 1510 and 1530. Contemporary Franciscan and Dominican missionaries in the Americas employed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit fully in their teaching, notably the Franciscans who in 1523 began work in Mexico in full flight of Joachimite doctrine and preaching.

Those Catholic reformers of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century — well before the Protestant Reformation — who were students of the *studia humanitatis* were aware of the patristic connection between the Spirit and social reform. St. Basil's idea of the link between the Spirit and reform of both church and society was being re-applied during this period. The ascetic monastic elements and withdrawal from the world were left to the monastics, but the importance of a communal life of prayers, work, and meals under the guidance of a set of rules was maintained in varying extents in schools, the developing university colleges, and lay confraternities. During this period greater appreciation was shown for St. Basil's linking of the Spirit with the individual and the communal life — both monastic life and society in general — in an effort to sanctify Christians, transforming human nature without denying or destroying it. The Basilean doctrine was that sanctification through the Spirit engendered love of others within society as a whole. It is true that in the sixteenth century the monasteries became less the focus and instrument for this process, and the local church, confraternities, schools, colleges, and hospitals became more important for communal transformation, but the notion of "reformation" still drew upon St. Basil's teaching that social well-being, and the social reform it implied, were dominant works of the Spirit.

We may therefore suggest that an unrecognized aspect of pre-Reformation Catholic reform included a move for skills and efficiency in salvation, which was not theologically semi-Pelagian, but simply advocated personal efficiency in devotions, piety, and spiritual transformation. This cast of mind saw the Spirit, with its role as illuminator and facilitator, as crucial to those spiritual skills. Theologically, the Spirit was conceived less as the individual soul's inward fire (which is not an easy topic for the clergy to preach and apply pastorally), and more as the giver of insight, steady understanding and resolution, as an instrument of pastoral care, inspiring faith, warmth and virtue, both personal and social. The effect of this increasing inward pastoral importance of the Spirit was to diminish the spiritual significance of the distant authority of Rome and the priesthood, and at the same time to give greater importance to the sacraments because they were vessels of the Spirit and fulfilled individual needs. There was thus a tendency for a gap to develop between the clergy

and the sacraments: The clergy were still necessary to carry out the processes of salvation, and retained their status as the administrators of the sacraments, but were spiritually less functional than the sacraments they administered. The bearers of gifts were necessary, and remained a priestly caste, but much more important were the gifts themselves, for the sacraments were fired by the Spirit, essential for salvation. This was reflected in devotional manuals on the eve of the Reformation which made increasing reference to the work of the Spirit.

perpetrators, and the victim's perception of the severity of the violence. The results of this study suggest that the victim's perception of the severity of the violence is a significant factor in the decision to seek legal action.

Limitations and Future Research. The limitations of this study include the use of a convenience sample and the lack of control over the assignment of participants to the experimental conditions.

Future research should focus on the development of interventions to reduce the risk of intimate partner violence and the improvement of legal and social support for victims.

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III

Évangéliques, Spirituali, and the Renaissance of the Spirit, 1540–1545: An Aspect of Catholic Reform

During the 1520s the events of the Reformation altered the role of the Spirit in western Christianity. When Luther reacted to semi-Pelagian free will in the economy of salvation by asserting doctrines of sin, grace, and justification by grace alone, Western Christendom became preoccupied with Luther's doctrine of justification and the effects that had flowed from it and were at the heart of Western Christendom's division. Luther's doctrine was expounded, opposed, modified, and developed, but one way or another almost all ecclesiastical persons made it the center of their theological attention. At first, reform-minded Catholics generally tried to reconcile Luther's doctrines — to reconcile works and free will with the pure grace and *sola fide* preached by the Reformers, either by some form of *duplex iustitia* or, as in the case of the Benedictines, by recourse to Greek patristic theology. Because the debates of the Reformation were conducted principally over justification and its ramifications for the sacraments, less attention was paid to the Spirit, in particular the idea of the Holy Spirit as an agent of reform. The pre-Reformation nexus between the Holy Spirit and reform was loosened. Historians have followed this theological withdrawal and the Catholic Reformation movements have been described by historians mainly in terms of the theological debate over justification and the efforts to achieve institutional reform. The pre-Reformation ideas of reform through the Spirit and its role in salvation and reform were pushed to one side by this concern with justification and its implications for salvation and reform. The commentators and the historians followed and exaggerated this trend, to the point that the historiography of the period came to describe Catholic reform movements as the Counter-Reformation, a reaction to Protestantism.

Roman Catholic reactions to the Lutheran and Reformed movements were not always hostile, even in the face of distress over schism. Luther's perception that salvation could not be merited because human free will was deeply twisted by sin struck a chord with many Catholics, who even in later days when they regretted bitterly the schisms of western Europe, nonetheless continued to believe that Luther had put his finger on a fundamental weakness in late medieval patterns of salvation. Gasparo Contarini, who was a scholastic Aristotelian, though less so after he became a bishop and had ecclesiastical responsibilities thrust upon him, recognized in Luther the same sort of crisis he had experienced some years earlier concerning his own sinful condition.

The problem for Catholic reformers, however, was not so much with Luther's doctrine of sin as with his corollary that justification *coram deo* is by grace alone through faith. This doctrine seemed to deny any value for freely willed responsibility in salvation, this in turn denied that the sacramental system was necessary as a source of saving grace, and if the sacramental system was not necessary, neither was much of the church's elaborate infrastructure for ministering salvation. Beyond this threat to the church and its structures, there seemed to be more general dangers. Some Catholics feared that if moral goodness, as well as being desirable on social grounds, could not also be seen as necessary to salvation, the pastoral effect of denying any human contribution to, or responsibility for, salvation would mean a breakdown of socially desirable moral resolution, putting at peril both society and people's immortal souls. Others were concerned with the political effects of Lutheranism when the restraints of divinely sanctioned moral behavior were weakened by being separated from the reward of salvation. Thus, Isidoro Chiari, an Italian Benedictine monk who was immensely sympathetic to Luther's understanding of sin and the doctrine of salvation by grace alone was nevertheless worried by the denial that works were of no account. In his *Adhortatio* of 1537, addressed to Protestants in the hope of securing doctrinal agreement, Chiari admonished Protestant divines, questioning whether ordinary men and women really understood their teaching on justification of faith alone: ". . . and do you think that ordinary people understand what you mean when you argue, with such force, that the power of justification lies not in works, but in faith, and no sins, except for unbelief alone, are able to damn a man, and that all sins may be overwhelmed in a moment by standing firm in faith."⁵¹

What Chiari had in mind, as did many others, was not only the theology of salvation but also its social consequences, especially the peasant uprisings

⁵¹ Isidori Chiari . . . *ad eos, qui a communi Ecclesiae sententia discessere, adhortatio ad concordiam* (Milan: apud Caluum, 1540), p. 157.

of the 1520s in Germany and other parts of Europe, in which Lutheran slogans of the liberty of a Christian man had been used freely and had been associated with expressions of millenarian and apocalyptic ideas of the Spirit.

Other, more intractable Catholics saw the Protestant Reformation simply as a three-pronged threat to the Western Church: a denial of any human capacity to merit salvation, a denial of the value of the church's sacramental system with its pastoral comforts and sense of progress toward holiness afforded by the sacraments, and a justification for schism. These people, whilst recognizing the good intentions and qualities of the Reformers, nevertheless flatly opposed their theology and its schismatic effects, and began to organize effective opposition. These were the intransigent *zelanti*, and it was they who steered Rome towards its final rejection of Protestantism at the Council of Trent. There were others, *évangéliques* in France and *spirituali* in Italy, who were caught between their appreciation of Luther's insights with its implications, and the Church of Rome. Increasingly they were caught, in Dermot Fenlon's neat phrase between "heresy and obedience." They tried hard to resolve the situation. In Italy Contarini, Vergerio and others constructed a doctrine of double justification, by which one is justified by grace alone, but that justification is confirmed or "topped up" in some way by justification achieved through good works. These theories were never convincing enough to resolve the problem and were eventually abandoned.

The failures of reconciliation turned others back toward the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Benedictine Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua, to which Chiari belonged, remained quite firm in their obedience to Rome, but they worked hard for reconciliation. Their reaction to the Protestant challenge was first to look into their own tradition of Greek patristic scholarship, and to use Chrysostom and the school of Antioch to reconcile salvation by grace alone with the necessity for works. Their conciliatory theology was rejected by both Rome and Geneva, however, and the opening sessions of the Council of Trent saw the arguments of their chief spokesman, Abbot Luciano degli Ottoni, being drowned in an uproar. After this happened, the Congregation retreated to a doctrine of sanctification closely informed by the Spirit.⁵²

In France, Briçonnet had been an advocate of church reform for several years before the Reformation. By the end of 1521 his attitudes were being shaped by the Reformation controversies, particularly after Luther's three major tracts of 1520. Institutional reform of the church by ecclesiastical legislation which had

⁵² Barry Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: The Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). In chapter 11 I argued that after the crucial sessions at Trent, the Congregation's piety partly disintegrated into exaggerated affective devotions. I now believe this shift was toward a doctrine of the Spirit.

not been successful, was, in any case, now partly marginalized since Luther's concept of reform required not the improvement of morals but a particular theological pattern of salvation. Moreover, Luther had undermined the Neoplatonist concept of "ascent" through ascetic purgation and illumination from the material to the spiritual world. In the face of Luther's dismissal of merit, the concept of practical piety efficiently pursued in a social context now needed to be asserted by Catholics in terms of grace as a gift of "living wisdom." Briçonnet's response was to develop a doctrine of the Spirit. The Spirit came as uncreated grace—a self-communication of God to the human spirit—a dynamic force that brought direct knowledge of God. This communication flowed continually, like living water from a fountain: It was "eae vive" from the "fontaine de l'Esprit de Dieu." This fountain may be possessed "en son coeur une source de fontaine vive . . . l'eave vifve sans intermission arrouze sa bouche et les conduictz de son corps."⁵³ Thus the Spirit works ceaselessly throughout history, throughout the universe, and in individuals. The Spirit is ceaselessly working and sanctifying—as Briçonnet put it in another letter, the Spirit is like sunshine.

The Reformers themselves developed a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which is not surprising since the Spirit had already been gaining significance as an agent of reform within active and methodical piety for at least a generation before the Reformation. The Reformation emphasis on the omnipotence of God and the helplessness of man required a different view of the Spirit, since rationality, though socially desirable, was a human work and could not make for salvation. Therefore Luther, and later Calvin, attached the work of the Holy Spirit to their doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith. Luther and Calvin both, each in his own way, maintained that there was a close connection between the external guidance of Scripture and the internal activity of the Spirit. In order to validate their Reformation, the reformers were faced with the problem of defining the authority of the Scripture, both to the believer as an individual and within the church. Luther's approach was that authority lay within the written word and was intimately bound up with the letter of the biblical text, in the words alone—in which the Spirit dwells in their being written and in their being understood. Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and other Swiss reformers, Karlstadt and the Anabaptists took another approach—that the Spirit was external to the written text. Thus it was not

⁵³ Briçonnet to Marguerite, 22 December 1521, *Guillaume Briçonnet et Marguerite d'Angoulême, Correspondance (1521–1524)*, 2 vols., ed. Christine Martineau, Michel Vessière, and Henry Heller (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1975, 1979), 1: no. 18, 81; no. 19, 93. Hereafter cited as *Correspondance*. Briçonnet's frequent use of the strong biblical image of Spirit as water of life is in, for example, Isaiah 44:3–4; John 4:10, 7:37–39, etc.; see Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3, *The River of the Water of Life (Revelation 22:1) Flows in the East and in the West*, pp. 3–10 for relevant patristic references.

the words of the Scripture themselves that gave understanding — they merely served as the guiding vehicle that the Spirit used to direct understanding from above into the minds of the diligent reader of the Bible.

The differences in approach were reflected most strongly in eucharistic disputation over the meaning of the dominical words of institution of the Lord's Supper, "This is my body . . . this is my blood." For Luther and for Cranmer (at least in his earlier phase) the meaning of the words lay in the words themselves — in the plain meaning of the text.⁵⁴ For more radical Protestants such as Calvin, the meaning lay in the Spirit which brought understanding of the "True Presence" of Christ at the Lord's Supper. Thus, Calvin, writing in his *Petit Traicte de la Sainte Cene de nostre Seigneur et seul Sauveur Iesus Christ* (1541) described the Lord's Supper in terms that acutely involved a doctrine of the Spirit. Calvin argued that the secret and miraculous power of God in the Eucharist was that "the Spirit of God is the bond of participation" (. . . l'Esprit de Dieu est le lien de ceste participation).⁵⁵ Cranmer's later doctrine of the "True Presence" was derived from the Swiss reformers, as he moved toward their teaching that the Spirit was external to the Word. According to Cranmer in his later works, the grace that is conferred in the Lord's Supper is conferred not by the eating and drinking of the elements, but by faith which the Spirit operates in the communicant. The Spirit stirs an understanding and assurance that sins are forgiven, that there is peace and communion with God and everlasting life is promised and indeed given.⁵⁶ Christ, in heaven, ". . . by his death delivered us from death, and daily nourisheth and increaseth us to eternal life." For Cranmer also, the Holy Spirit is the "band of participation" that makes available, to be accepted by faith, the benefits of Christ's passion and comforting, sustaining and nourishing those who partake of the Lord's Supper. The Spirit unites human and divine in one mystical body.⁵⁷ Even as early as 1531 Cranmer held to a strong doctrine of the Holy Spirit, for he declared the conscience of the king concerning the proposed divorce from Katherine of Aragon to be a motion of the Holy Ghost which is higher than law.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Peter Newman Brooks, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1965), pp. 36–37. Hereafter cited as *Th. Cranmer's Doctrine*.

⁵⁵ *Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. 33, col. 460, quoted in Brooks, *Th. Cranmer's Doctrine*, p. 68: I have translated the crucial term "le lien" differently from Brookes.

⁵⁶ Brooks, *Th. Cranmer's Doctrine*, p. 94, quotes *Archbishop Cranmer on the True and Catholic Doctrine and Use of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, ed. Charles H. H. Wright (London: Chas J. Thynne; Protestant Reformation Society, 1907), pp. 25–27. For faith operated by Spirit see pp. 25, 89, 98, 130, 194, 251.

⁵⁷ John Edmund Cox, *Writings and Disputations of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, Martyr, 1556, Relative to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1844), pp. 271, 282, 311, 328, 341–342.

⁵⁸ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A life* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 56.

Separately from this Protestant conception of the Spirit's mystical unity, Erasmus reaffirmed the pre-Reformation emphasis on its institutional communal bonds — both in church and civil society. In 1533, he published a commentary on Psalm 83/84 which indicates, late in his life, an interest in the Holy Spirit as an instrument of unity, in the face of the hardening divisions between Protestants and Catholics and the proliferation of smaller sects and growing suspicion of the religious, social, and political implications of confident appeals to the Holy Spirit made by those sects. In this work and others, Erasmus viewed the third person of the Trinity not so much as an agent of reform as the means of unity. Erasmus's paradigm is from Genesis: Order is the matrix for life. The Spirit brings leadership and governance to the people of God, because it reveals inviolable truth for guidance and inspires the glue of peace. Truth and peace together produce unity.⁵⁹ For Erasmus, therefore, the Spirit was an instrument of good order and unity within the church, and by implication within society at large.

During the 1540s, the conservative wing of the Roman Church, notably Ambrogio Politi, increasingly defined heresy in terms of accommodation to the doctrines of sin, grace, and salvation raised by the Protestant Reformers. This hard-line group had its own doctrine of the Spirit: It resembled that of the *spirituali* and *évangéliques* in that it saw the Spirit operating through both affect and human reason and skills. The difference lay in their conviction that the Spirit developed the muscular virtues of discipline, strength, resolution, obedience, and militant piety. Between 1542 when the Colloquy at Ratisbon failed and 1546 when the Council of Trent condemned Protestant doctrines of justification, those who wished to come to terms with the Protestants were thus pushed toward the choice between heresy and obedience — though it is now clear that several continued to work for reconciliation for another twenty years beyond those crisis years of 1542–1545. The historian's point of crisis for the *spirituali* consequently depends on which set of hopes is at issue. As far as hopes of reaching understanding on the doctrine of justification was concerned, the crisis came in the 1540s and hopes were finally dashed at Trent (despite some ambiguities of its formularies). But the hope that some reconciliation might be achieved through a doctrine of the Spirit lingered on quite strongly for much longer. There were reasons for this continuing hope: Luther's, and even more so Calvin's, doctrines of the Spirit were now realized by Catholics to possess substantial common ground, and after 1546, when Trent rejected their reconciliatory theology drawn from Greek sources, the

⁵⁹ The writings of Erasmus are summarized briefly by Pabel, "The Peaceful People of Christ," pp. 84–85.

Benedictines of Santa Giustina moved toward a more definite doctrine of the Spirit. The letters of Marguerite and Vittoria were a reaffirmation of ideas of Spirit and reform — a turning away from the now failing attempts to reconcile differences over justification, and (in a more positive way) to look to the Spirit as the only remaining means of fruitful reform and reconciliation.

During the five years from 1541 to 1546, between Ratisbon and the Council of Trent, the *zelanti* gained in confidence and strength, and correspondingly exerted increasing pressure on the Catholic *évangeliques* and *spirituali*. From this point there were two groups within the Catholic reform movement. The first comprised those who continued to define themselves against Protestantism, concentrating on the justification debate, seeking to resolve differences with some form of *duplex iustitia*. In the face of increasing pressure and risk they either persevered in seeking reconciling formulae, or themselves became Protestant. The second group, however, now defined themselves less against the Protestant Reformation, turning away from the now failing attempts to reconcile differences over justification, toward other patterns of reform. Some concentrated on the processes of sanctification and its works through the Spirit. It is this movement to restore the doctrine of the Spirit which is reflected in the letters of 1545 written by Vittoria and Marguerite to each other as they and their circles moved toward a revival of the older view of the Spirit. After the disappointments of the opening sessions of the Council of Trent in 1546–1547, the same change of direction was followed by the Benedictines of the Cassinese Congregation, who withdrew from using Greek patristic doctrines of justification for reconciliation, and looked more toward its Antiochene doctrine of the Spirit for sanctification and reform. The *évangeliques* and *spirituali* who now turned to the Spirit amalgamated the older view of the Spirit penetrating the affect with purging and illuminating fire with the more recent ideas of the Spirit empowering rational skills to work efficiently for reform, renewal and sanctification. This was happening at the very time when there was a different kind of revival of Greek patristic theology within the Roman Church, a revival intended not to serve the cause of reconciliation but to provide a patristic quarry for anti-Lutheran arguments.

Marguerite of Navarre and Vittoria Colonna looked to the Spirit as their principal remaining hope for their style of Catholic reform. They were at the center of two groups, Marguerite with Briçonnet and the circle at Meaux, and Vittoria with Reginald Pole and the *spirituali* at Viterbo. The two women were no ordinary members of their respective patrician classes. Marguerite d'Angoulême was born in 1492, the sister of the French king Francis I. In 1509 she married the Duke of Alençon, and after his death in 1525 following

the battle of Pavia, she married Henri d'Albret, heir to the disputed Navarre "kingdom" on the Spanish-French border. From 1515 she lived close to the political power and the scintillating style of the French royal court. Highly educated and creative, she knew Latin, Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Hebrew, though her spoken Italian was not fluent. When Bishop Vergerio met the queen in 1540 he wrote to Vittoria Colonna that during his audience he spoke in Italian and Marguerite in French, but with some phrases of Italian and Latin, and in this manner they communicated easily. Marguerite's written Italian may have been sufficient for her to compose the letters to Vittoria though it is most probable that she dictated them to her secretaries Alamanni and Delaunay who rendered her French dictation or Italian drafts into Italian prose. Certainly there was considerable knowledge of Italian language and culture at Fontainebleau.⁶⁰

Marguerite was very much her own woman, and remained intellectually and spiritually independent of her brother's forceful but limited view of both the temporal and the eternal realm. She had a long tenure as the king's confidante, held a position on his secret council, and was involved continuously in diplomatic activity, especially from 1520 to the mid-1540s, from which she drew an extensive knowledge of state affairs. She possessed an acknowledged shrewdness in judging character, especially her ability to discern concealed ambition, a capacity that gave her a deep mistrust of career-oriented clergy. It is clear that Marguerite embodied the ideal of the elite Renaissance woman.

Marguerite's religious views developed out of her close relationship and correspondence with Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet (1470-1534), a leading reformer of the Gallican Church. In 1507 he had become abbot of Saint-Germain des-Prés, where he restored the strict observance of the Benedictine rule and adopted the statutes of the monastery of Chezal Benoît. As with so many reformers, his practical administrative skills were combined with humanist scholarship, and he and his friend Lefèvre d'Étaples built up biblical scholarship within the abbey. In 1515 Briçonnet became Bishop of Meaux. In his diocese he initiated a program for renewal with three emphases: study of the Bible centered on the scholarly translations of Lefèvre d'Étaples, preaching on biblical themes, and careful episcopal oversight of clergy and laity. He also wrote frequently to Marguerite, whose distinctive religious views took shape in the course of their correspondence between 1521 and 1524. At the center of her beliefs was Briçonnet's biblical doctrine of the Spirit, that is,

⁶⁰ *Lettere Volgari* (Venice: Manuzio, 1542), 102r-104r; Auguste Emile Picot, *Les Français Italianisants au xvi^e siècle*, vol. 1 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), pp. 43, 46-48 (hereafter cited as *Les Français*); Maurice Mignon, *Les affinités intellectuelles de l'Italie et de la France* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1923), pp. 129-133.

salvation by the cross through the death of Christ destroying death, the *Christus Victor* motif, which he linked with the notion of the “doux Paraclet,” the sweet Spirit, which led to a renewal of life. The link between Scripture and Spirit that Briçonnet had developed gave Marguerite’s piety a misleadingly Protestant appearance. The work of the Spirit was twofold: the historical inspiration of the church through the biblical and patristic writers (which validates the historical church in the face of Protestant dismissal of the authority of tradition), and the present inspiration and enlightenment of those who were now reading the historically inspired writers, and were seeking communion with God. The Spirit is everywhere throughout the entire cosmic fabric, but is centralized in particular foci—in God the creator and also in the mediating death of Christ which alone can bring salvation. Christ has wrought salvation for creation but the Spirit works salvation within creation through the human response of what Briçonnet called “l’eau vive”—the living water of faith.

The role of the Spirit clarifies obscurities in both the poetry and the piety of Marguerite. She wrote on the themes of human and divine love, employing vocabulary in which her unquestionable cries of love barely indicate that they are directed to the divine rather than a human lover in a manner that seems ambiguous, but makes sense in the light of her connection between the Cross and the Spirit. This connection between the Cross and Spirit also explain why Marguerite was so strongly sympathetic to Lutheran theological insights, although she did not become Protestant. She certainly read Lutheran tracts, passed to her by the Dean of Strasbourg, Hohenlohe, and her knowledge of Reformation theology is obvious. Luther’s theology and the Lutheran Reformation had a strong influence on the doctrine of the Spirit developed by the bishop in his dealings with her. His assertion of the authority of Scripture alone as bearing the authentic message of the Christian life and salvation was taken into account by Briçonnet, who drew the Spirit into his interpretation of the authority of the Bible, which has come “par l’inspiration du Saint Esperit ont parlé et escript les saintz prophetes et hommes de Dieu.” Briçonnet therefore spoke of the Bible as an instrument to understand the human condition through “l’escolle du saint Esperit qui apprend tout.”⁶¹

By 1524, Briçonnet’s letters to Marguerite, who was then the Duchesse d’Alençon, developed the notion of twofold impact: The Spirit had inspired the ancient writers who wrote the words of Scripture, and now the same Spirit enlightens and inspires those who in modern times read those words.

⁶¹ Guillaume Briçonnet to Marguerite d’Angoulême, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, no. 42, 218; vol. 2, no. 113, 215.

At the same time he assigned the Spirit the role (long recognized) of being an instrument of the Incarnation through the visitation to the Virgin. Thus, the Spirit was involved in the Old Testament, the Incarnation, the New Testament, and the continuing guidance and transformation of the created world — a continual divine work of transformation of the church and of the individual members of the body. The instrument of the Spirit's ceaseless work is the Word — a double inspiration working first in the writers of Scripture and then in the readers of Scripture.

The focus of the Spirit's double inspiration was the person of Jesus Christ with whom the Spirit shares equality together with God the Father. The unity of the Trinity is revealed by the Spirit and the knowledge of its work for humanity is conveyed by the Spirit. As Briçonnet wrote to Marguerite in December 1521, at the beginning of their correspondence "l'égalité de divinité (car les oeuvres de la superceleste Trinité ne son point par tresor divisees) faict les oeuvres."⁶² The greatest of these works was the passion and death of Christ for the redemption of the world. The Spirit shares in that redemptive work on Calvary, and also conveys the benefits of Christ crucified to the human race. Thus, "the Spirit is universally present throughout the entire cosmic fabric, yet uniquely present in Christ, and, by extension, in his disciples."⁶³ Thus, the salvation that Christ has achieved for creation through his death, the Spirit continues to work out within Creation, transforming it: "... et par ainsy nostre nature convertie, transmuee, abismee et absorbee en la toute-puissante divinité."⁶⁴

Briçonnet's teaching on redemption through the Spirit was strongly Pauline — the phrase "comme dict Monsieur saint Pol" recurs frequently in his letters. His letters to Marguerite reiterated the point that Jesus by his death and resurrection gave himself for her, to wash away her sin and to purify her conscience for service. God's "children who walk the path of the Spirit" (enfous qui cheminent par esprit) become aware of true freedom. Those who live merely according to reason are blind to the true depths of life. The understanding that comes with mere worldly wisdom is like the feeble light of a candle in comparison with full sunlight such as is the understanding that comes from the Spirit. The Spirit was thus the messenger of redemption, who visited the soul and remained within the soul as an illuminating witness to salvation, a comforter and a source of strength.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., vol. 1, no. 28, 152.

⁶³ Heather M. Vose, "Marguerite d'Angoulême: A study in Sixteenth-Century spirituality Based on Her 1521–1524 Correspondence with Guillaume Briçonnet" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Western Australia, 1985), pp. 204–205.

⁶⁴ Briçonnet, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, no. 18, 83.

⁶⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 46, 225 has a detailed exposition of this theme; see also vol. 2, no. 82, 111.

The early correspondence between the bishop and Marguerite developed the doctrine of the Spirit partly because of their pre-Reformation concerns for church reform and the partly because the Lutheran Reformation intensified these concerns and at the same time questioned the theological basis of late-medieval theology. Both Briçonnet and Marguerite clearly wanted to promote Catholic reform and also to develop and clarify the theological basis it needed, but they wanted these developments to occur within the Catholic Church and not as part of some schismatic movement. Their solution to this problem was to develop and unite the two pre-Reformation doctrines of the Spirit as an instrument of reform. One doctrine was that the Spirit brings gifts of an intense individual experience of purgation, illumination, and indwelling fire of love; the other doctrine, in the tradition of St. Basil, saw the Spirit as a strengthening and illuminating guide to community life, giving understanding and strengthening bonds amongst the group— healing the wounds of the group and avoiding further wounds through charity and understanding. By early 1524 the theological basis of Briçonnet's doctrine of the Spirit had been more or less completed.

During 1524 Marguerite and the bishop both began to face heavy problems. She was distressed by the serious illness of her mother, Louise of Savoy and the death of a young aunt, and was slowed down by her own ill-health and encumbered with an increasing burden of court affairs. At the same time, Briçonnet was troubled by further suspicion of his emphasis on church reform and his sympathy for Protestant insights— especially from the Faculty of Theology in Paris, from the *Parlement*, and from within his own city of Meaux. The situation was complicated by Aquitaine's long history of subterranean religious dissent, where the beginnings of reforming ideas, even heresy, predate the influence of Luther's writings. There may have been long-standing Lollard connections from the time when the duchy of Aquitaine was an English possession until 1453, and even after the English left there were commercial connections, especially the wine trade between England and Bordeaux and the upstream vineyards of the Dordogne and Garonne, which had been interrupted after 1453 but was picking up again during the 1490s. Certainly, once the Reformation gathered strength, from the 1520s, Lutheran influences seem to have been associated with the wine exports from Aquitaine to England and Holland. Moreover, the position of both Briçonnet and Marguerite was not made easier by the particular interest of Calvin himself in the region.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ J. Beauroy, *Vin et société à Bergerac: du Moyen Age au temps modernes* (Saratoga, Cal.: Anma Libri, 1976), pp. 57–59.

Briçonnet was also bothered by ill-health and then, in 1524, there were episodes of frankly Lutheran religious practices within his diocese, with dangerous potential for outside intervention and retribution. In the face of these problems he and Marguerite reassured themselves that "l'Esprit de Dieu donne tesmoinage a nostre esperit que nous sommes filz de Dieu."⁶⁷ Indeed, their various problems pushed Briçonnet to develop further his idea of the Spirit as a messenger of redemption, and a strengthening indwelling assurance that the believer shared in that redemption. During 1524 the letters of Marguerite and Briçonnet vigorously described both sin and sanctification in terms of the action of the Spirit, even arguing that the logical implication of Christ's saving act is that the ignorance, blindness, and mortality of sinful humanity ought, in a sense, to be accepted because it can be redeemed by God's grace through the Cross. In one act God both judges and accepts the sinner with compassion — an insight emphasized by Luther in his understanding of the righteousness of God and the sinner *coram deo*. Therefore, wrote Briçonnet to Marguerite, she should look not at her sins, but at Christ, at whom she could gaze because the Spirit first brought people an understanding of their sin, and then an understanding of Christ as their salvation, mediating both the judgment and the compassion of the divine Trinity.⁶⁸ The Spirit therefore was conspicuous and essential in the pattern of salvation.

Briçonnet's understanding of sanctification was also shaped by his doctrine of the Spirit, which, he argued, is what brings life — rich, full, brimming vivacity — to the human race burdened by hopelessness and death. The phrases occur frequently: "l'Esprit viviffiant," "l'esperit de vie, qui est venu au monde," the divine abundance of life, "sy grande liberalité." In a passage of striking agricultural imagery, he compared the human soul to a wild and barren *lambrusque* from which new growth and fruit may be brought by the skills of husbandry. ". . . les ames lambrusques et sauvaiges, avec leur terrestre et infructueusite corporelle, viviffiees par l'inhabitation du Saint Esperit et par l'ardeur et charité de Dieu."⁶⁹ The imagery is significant: Fallen human nature is the *lambrusque*, the wild uncultivated vine that yielded little. It was withered but not dead and needed only nourishment — the nourishment of the Spirit which was like sunshine, ceaselessly at work — to become healthy and fruitful. If new growth were to be engendered by the Spirit, skillful husbandry was needed to recover health richness and new life. This was the basis of spiritual renewal in the individual and also in the corporate body.

⁶⁷ Briçonnet, *Correspondance*, vol. 2, pp. 93, 94, 142–143; 95, 147–148.

⁶⁸ This sentiment is strongly expressed in Briçonnet, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, no. 36, pp. 192–193.

⁶⁹ *Correspondance*, vol. 1, p. 60.

The teaching was drawn from Catholic pre-Reformation sources, and was certainly not semi-Pelagian, and it went a long way toward meeting Luther's criticism of semi-Pelagian elements in the late-medieval sacramental system. Having these qualities the doctrine could also be the instrument of Catholic reform without inciting schism, and might therefore help to resolve the gathering crisis of Western Christendom during the 1520s.⁷⁰

These implications of Briçonnet's teaching, and Marguerite's concurrence, led them to another definition of the unreformed nature of the church. The faults of the church do not lie, at least directly, in the semi-Pelagian sacramental and other practices that Luther attacked, nor in crude venality. The faults rather lay in the desolation and disorder ("tel desordre que chacun voit") which came from not accepting the new life, the warmth, the light, the vivacity that the Spirit could give together with new creativity and fruitfulness as divine love surges through the soul.⁷¹ The Spirit, however, was apparently absent from the contemporary church, and consequently the fruitful relationships between Spirit and Word, and between Spirit and renewal were also missing. Because the life-giving Spirit has both spiritual and physical consequences, the Spirit should be closely involved in the human works that are part of the fruits of salvation. But when the Spirit was not involved, the gulf between its spiritual wisdom and human, worldly reason was very deep. Briçonnet expounded this view in a letter to Marguerite dated 6 March 1522 in which he uses common Neoplatonic language of God as light, to emphasize the point that the wisdom given by the world must surrender to the divine understanding ("mourir sensiblement pour vivre intellectuellement") in order to be purged of presumptive egotism, to move beyond the purely rational to an integration of the intellectual and spiritual, held together by the Spirit. Only then does sanctification and transformation into a new life occur—a new life centered on Christ. Thus the Spirit refashions human understanding and perceptions, but does so without removing human free will. All choices were informed choices, guided by the warmth of the Spirit, "grand feu tout eschauffant, illuminant et parfaitant. . ."⁷²

Marguerite was involved at every stage as Briçonnet's theology of the Spirit developed pre-Reformation ideas of the Spirit and Catholic reform in the context of Lutheran successes and an intensified need for Catholic re-

⁷⁰ Ibid., vol. 2, no. 28, 53.

⁷¹ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 11, 60–62; no. 21, 127; vol. 2, no. 23, 51.

⁷² Ibid., vol. 1, nos. 21, 128; 28, 143; 34, 172–173; vol. 2, nos. 31, 53; 52, 63; 55, 64, the last with a Biblical reference to 1 Corinthians 15:45. The editors of the *Correspondance* sometimes suggest that references to the Spirit are Neoplatonic, when it is more probable that they are of biblical, especially Johannine, derivation.

form. By the early 1530s she, together with Briçonnet, held a sophisticated belief in the Spirit, which ranged from the doctrine of the Trinity to the sanctification of individuals and communities. The combination of theological ideals with the practical tasks of reform of individuals and societies meant that she supported a coterie of people with a similar cast of mind, including some Protestants. On occasion this created tensions and conflict between Marguerite and her husband, Henri d'Albret. Years later, in 1555, Marguerite's daughter Jeanne recalled in a letter to the viscount of Gourdon, how as a child, probably in 1534, there was a blazing row between her parents. The letter begins:

Viscount, Sir,

I am writing the present letter to tell you that until now I have been following the deceased Queen, Madame my most honoured Mother, whom God absolve, regarding the doubt between the Religions in which she engaged through her deceased brother King Francis the First of good and glorious memory, my most honoured Uncle, not to put new dogmas in her head, nor to occupy herself with other than amusing literature, and being always mindful of the disputes that long before, the deceased King my much honoured Father and Lord, whom God keep in his grace, discovered when the Queen was at prayer in her chambers with the Ministers Roussel and Farel, who straightaway fled in great dismay. He slapped my mother on the right cheek, and gave me a caning, while severely forbidding involvement in Doctrine, which cost me bitter tears and kept me in fear and sadness until their passing . . .⁷³

The authenticity of this letter with its description of a violent episode in Marguerite's room has been questioned on grounds of style and inaccuracies of

⁷³ Bibliolèque Nationale, Vallant Collection, ms fr 17044, v.1, "Recueil de plusieurs Lettres des Roys et Reines de France d'autres Souverains de l'Europe & des Ministres d'Estats escrites aux viscomtes comtes & marquis de Gourdon Mirabel et Senevieres tous de meme Maison ou l'on a ajouté seulement les points & les virgules," fols. 446-455, *Lettres de Jeanne d'Albret*, fol. 446, "Premier Lettre de Jeanne d'Albret Reine de Navare le 22 aoust 1555." The letter runs

Monsieur le visconte je vous escript la presente pour vous dire que jusques a maintenant j'ay esté sur les voyes de la defuncte Royne Madame ma tres honnorée Mere que Dieu absolve au regard du doute entre les Religions laquelle Royne induite par defunct son frere Monsieur le Roy francois premier de bonne et glorieuse memoire mon tres honnoré Oncle, a ne se mettre en cervelle dogmes nouveaux ne se cuyda oncques que de Romans jovials, outres plus me recordant toujours bien des noyses que loing auparavant le defunct Roy Monsieur mon tres honnoré Pere et Seigneur que Dieu tienne en grace rechercha alors que la ditte Royne faisant dans sa chambre prieres avecques les Ministres Roussel et Farel quy dheure sesquiverent en grand esmoy luy bailla un soufflet sur la jouë dextre & me tanisa de verges en deffendant asprement de ne se mesler de Doctrine, ce quy me cousta larmes ameres & ma retenue en tremeur et complainte jusques a leurs trepas advenus . . .

the childhood memories, but there seems little doubt that there was a quarrel over religion although details may have been confused.⁷⁴ She may, for instance, have mistakenly recollected as Farel, Lefèvre d'Étaples, who lived at Marguerite's court, along with Roussel, until his death in 1536.⁷⁵

By the time that Briçonnet died in 1534 Marguerite had become much more than the bishop's disciple and sounding board, and after his death she expounded their theological ideas in her literary works, which became a vehicle for her attempt to work out her ideas on reform, sanctification, and fullness of new life. Her *Oraison à nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ*, written in 1531 when Briçonnet was still alive and published frequently between 1531 and 1547, was described by Jourda as lacking in unity and order, but his judgment missed the point. As Vose has shown, the poem has a tight Trinitarian structure with the culminating theme of salvation offered through the Spirit — "O vivificateur," who dismantles vice and brings virtues to life within a personal and vibrant divine-human relationship.⁷⁶ She wrote *Comédie sur le Trespas du Roy*, probably in 1547, after the death of her brother. Human reason cannot cope with grief, only the divine comforter Paracletis. Jourda and Saulnier have suggested that the character of Paracletis, the Spirit, was inserted as a *deus ex machina* to resolve the problem of death, but a close reading shows that in this work the appearance of the Paraclete is not used to gloss over the problem of death. But Paracletis is more than comforter — it is, in fact, the messenger of redemption, bringing hope and new life. The Spirit brings the message of hope of victory over self, adversity and mortality, and thus delivers a definitive promise of complete fulfillment.⁷⁷ Another work,

⁷⁴ Yves Cazaux, in, *Jeanne d'Albret* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1973), p. 181, fn. 62, pp. 376–377; Raymond Ritter, in *Les Solitudes de Marguerite de Navarre (1527–1549)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1953), p. 200, fn. 71. The letters in question are of the Vallant collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale, from Jeanne of Navarre to the viscount of Gourdon, and one letter of reply from him. Ruble, Roelker, and Jourda, the three historians who have worked the most extensively and intensively with the letters of Jeanne d'Albret, either do not raise this question (Ruble, Jourda), or accept the authenticity of the letters. See Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême*, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre, 1492–1549. Étude biographique et Littéraire, vol. 1 (Paris: Debrouwer, 1930), p. 181, note (hereafter cited as *Marguerite d'Angoulême*). I am very much indebted to Dr. David Bryson for drawing my attention to this episode, which he has dealt with fully in his doctoral dissertation, "Queen Jeanne and the Protestant Dream: The Rise and Fall of the Vision of Southern France as Protestant Homeland, 1533–1598" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1998).

⁷⁵ Jourda, while unable to date the event, does not question the validity of the letter itself: "... la lettre de Jeanne d'Albret, peu explicite, reste comme un témoignage des rapports entre Henri et Marguerite sur la question religieuse" (*Marguerite d'Angoulême*, p. 181, n. 62).

⁷⁶ The edition of the *Oraison* is that of Jean de Tournes, Lyon, 1547, reprinted in *Marguerites, de la Marguerite des Princesses, tresillustre royne de Navarre*, ed. Ruth Thomas (East Ardsley: S. R. Publishers, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 135–137 (hereafter cited as *Marguerites*); Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême*, vol. 1, pp. 380–381.

⁷⁷ Briçonnet, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, pp. 1, 25.

L'Inquisiteur, was published in 1536 when religious persecution of *évangéliques* had diminished. The work seems to be addressed to younger men of the evangelical persuasion at her court, and it expounds the idea of "une naissance nouvelle," "mort a soy/Par la vertu du Saint Esprit." The message comes with the Spirit, who is linked to the Word and to Christ the Redeemer. The same Trinitarian doctrine of the Spirit and what was involved in abundant new life was explored in the poem *Prisons*. The Spirit brought liberty, ". . . ou L'Esprit est divin et vehement/La liberté y est parfaitement."⁷⁸ The theme of the Spirit and liberty was obviously felt strongly, for amongst the tapestries at the Chateau of Pau were ten pieces of black satin with green and gold embroidery with "Ubi Spiritus, ibi Libertas."

The liberating power of the Spirit was explored by Marguerite in one of the more unusual tales of the Heptameron, the thirteenth-century story of *Chastelaine de Vergi* (novella 70) which she retold from written sources. The narrator, Oisille, recounts how thwarted and tragic lovers were destroyed by envy and gossip, but as Nancy Virtue argues, in Marguerite's hands the story is changed and told with an evangelical twist. The context of the story is the Old Testament world of lies and deceit and failure to serve God, and the pact between the lovers represents the covenant between God and man. The story-telling group has a daily bible reading, which for this day includes Acts 2:1–13, on Pentecost and the visitation of the Holy Spirit. Marguerite's tale does not mention the Spirit but only the wicked world which is a perversion of the Spirit, though at the beginning of the eighth day the prologue refers to the way that the Holy Spirit spoke through her mouth, "Le Saint Esperit . . . parlast par sa bouche," full of sweetness and love, and they went off to Mass. Thus the world of betrayal, deception, and harsh retribution, which have led historians such as Bloch to see only fatalism in Novella 70, is actually used to give the message of hope in the Holy Spirit. Virtue concludes that the joys of heaven come through the Holy Spirit to inflame the heart, filling it with transforming love: "me faict vous prier, mes dames, de demander à Dieu son Saint Esperit, par lequel vostre amour soynt tant enflambée en l'amour de Dieu . . ."⁷⁹

The doctrine of the Spirit expounded by Marguerite and Vittoria, not only

⁷⁸ Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms F. Fr. 24.89, fol. 242.

⁷⁹ Nancy Virtue, "Le Saint Esperit . . . parlast par sa bouche: Marguerite de Navarre's Evangelical Revision of the *Chastelaine de Vergi*," in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28, no. 3 (1997): 811–824; R. Howard Bloch, "The Lay and the Law: Sexual Textual Transmission in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, and the *Lai d'Ignaure*, and the *Lais* of Marie de France," *Stanford French Review* 14, nos. 1–2 (spring 1990): 181–210, but especially 186. The quotations are from Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. Michel François (Paris: Garnier, 1967), p. 418.

in these letters but in their works generally, was sensitive to the contemporary requirements of Catholic reform. It was Christocentric and biblical — with the Spirit being linked to both Christ and the Word, and moreover, the Spirit was the messenger of redemption, the interpreter of Scripture and giver of new life. The Spirit was the continuator of Christ's work on earth, granted to the disciples after Christ's ascension to heaven. In fact, the Holy Spirit was the presence of God on earth, working in and through the institutional, hierarchical, and sacramental church, particularly through the sacraments. They emphasized the divine initiative in the Spirit bringing redemption, as distinct from the Spirit assisting in "ascent salvation" of purgation and illumination toward a union with God.

Both Briçonnet and Marguerite developed their own way of expressing that notion of the Spirit bringing liberty and vivacity. Marguerite's approach closely resembled another aspect of pre-Reformation Catholic reformers in that she set her doctrine of the Spirit and the new life very strongly within the context of social life and earthly ties. For her, individual fulfillment and salvation did not mean a complete loss of self in union with God. Instead it lay in the individuality given by the Spirit, through liberty, vivacity, and new life. Worldly problems, especially human mortality, were not avoided, but were grasped with the strength given by the Spirit; human reason was not disdained, but renewed with new and deeper understanding. Above all, love carried in by the Spirit shaped and enriched the personality. The pattern of salvation was evangelical, beginning with the recognition and clear statement of the deadly grip of sin. This penitential recognition was followed by the withered sinner's release from sin's thrall, but whereas in Protestant teaching this release comes through justification, Marguerite and Vittoria whilst not denying justification by grace accepted by faith, actually express the release from sin through the incursion of the Holy Spirit which brings new life to the sinner as sunshine and the husbandman bring new life to the *lambrusque*.

Historians have yet to explore fully two aspects of Marguerite d'Angoulême. The first is her extensive and profound knowledge of the Bible, revealed by the way in which her letters and her literary works were saturated with biblical allusions. Her extensive biblical knowledge certainly does not indicate that she was a Protestant or crypto-Protestant, for the biblical allusions in fact shaped her Catholic theology. The second aspect is her complex personality. The apparent contradictions in her life, giving rise to questions such as whether she was a mystic, or a covert Protestant, arise not out of ambiguity or indecision regarding the sacred and profane tensions in her life, but are elements in a coherent spirituality which was sometimes best expressed by paradox. The center of her religious life was paradoxical — a strong conscious-

ness of sin and inadequacy before God (which gave her sympathy with Protestant insights) was balanced with her self-acceptance of her own human needs and potential, including her own sexuality and need for relationships, an acceptance that gave her great impetus toward reform of self and others within the Catholic Church.

A study of Marguerite's personality may prove to be a useful interpretive tool in other ways, such as her interest in English affairs, which of course, had its pragmatic elements, but it is also true that she had an appreciative audience in the young Elizabeth, who had a high regard for Marguerite's religious views. To a considerable extent that regard was a recognition of Marguerite's literary ability, particularly her sensitive use of the French language at a time of linguistic development, and her ability to express deep religious perceptions in language that was pure, poetic and what has been called "incandescent." Certainly the vigor of her literary style arose not only out of her natural talent, but also out of her theology which deliberately embraced both the Spirit and the world, both freedom and discipline. Her faith was not a fatalistic trust, but an active, cooperative trust in the Spirit and the message that the Cross means the death of death and therefore the renewal of life.

. . . la tresgrand' largesse
De vostre amour fonde mon esperance.
Meltez mes maux du tout en oubliance,
Et les couvrez par vostre grand' sagesse,
En me faisant sentir l'experience
Par vive Foy, de la bonté immense . . .⁸⁰

Marguerite's correspondent, Vittoria Colonna, was born in 1490 at Marino, in the hills to the south of Rome.⁸¹ Her maternal grandfather was Frederico Montefeltro, duke of Urbino. In 1501 her family fell on hard times when their wealth was confiscated by Pope Alexander VI. At the age of seven she was betrothed to Ferdinand d'Avalos, the Marquis of Pescara, and they married when she was nineteen but soon after Ferdinand was taken a prisoner of war, during which period she began to write Neoplatonist poetry praising her husband's heroism and lamenting his absence. Her husband returned but in succession her younger brother, her father, and her mother died. In a melancholy condition she went to Rome where she spent her time amongst people devoted to literature and ecclesiastical reform.

⁸⁰ *Oraison*, in *Marguerites*, Ruth Thomas, p. 142; Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême*, vol. 1.

⁸¹ The basic biographical article is by Georgio Patrizi, "Vittoria Colonna," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 27 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1982), pp. 448-457.

During the 1520s, apparently convinced that she would not have children, she virtually adopted the young Alfonso del Vasto, the first but certainly not the last young man whom she took under her wing. In 1525 she suffered the first of many recurrent fevers, and also in the same year her husband died of wounds in the army of the Emperor at the battle of Pavia. When he died she took steps to enter a convent, but was dissuaded from doing so by her brother Ascanio who, amongst other reasons, perceived her developing public relations value to the family. She was now thirty-five years old, at the height of her striking presence — a handsome dark-haired woman with compelling brown eyes — and a widow. Also, by this time Vittoria had influence in cultural circles: She and Michelangelo wrote poetry for each other, she with her sonnets in the style of Petrarch, and he in praise of her physical and spiritual beauty; Castiglione said that she inspired his book, *The Courtier*. Her brother's advice that she not become a nun was supported by Pope Clement VII who wrote to remind her that good Christian lives can be lived outside the cloister. These sentiments of Clement coincided with reservations about the monastic life held by Pietro Bembo, Sadoletto, and other Catholic reformers to whom she was close. In the end, she did not become a nun.

Vittoria's decision was not a sign of crypto-Protestant antipathy to the monastic life. On the contrary, she was extremely well disposed toward monasticism, especially those orders of monks and friars that had reformed themselves and followed their vocations with exemplary piety. In 1529 Vittoria reaffirmed the obligations of her husband's family to restore certain alienated land to the abbey of Montecassino, the abbey that twenty-four years earlier had passed into the reformed Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua. By 1529, the Congregation had now restored Montecassino toward something of its former glory in learning and piety, and Vittoria's benevolence toward the Congregation was undoubtedly warmed by the Benedictines' growing reputation for learning and piety and by the beginning of their attempts to apply Greek patristic theology to the controversies of the Protestant Reformation. Her high regard for monasticism is also shown by her dedication to the sermons of friars and by the fact that throughout her life she spent a great deal of time visiting and staying for long periods in various convents.

Her instinct for the monastic life was matched by her vigorous and worldly drive for personal contact and strong friendships with people — especially with scholars, clergy and artists — and by strong sympathy for the issues raised by the Reformation and now being discussed in reform-minded circles. In 1530 she went to Naples and joined in the group around the Spaniard Juan de Valdés: This group included Peter Martyr Vermigli the Augustinian hermit, Flaminio the poet, Isabella Bresena, Giulia Gonzaga and later the

Cassinese Benedictine monk Benedetto da Mantova, who was author of the *Beneficio di Cristo*, published in 1543. Thus, we see in Vittoria four strong religious characteristics: a considerable knowledge of the Bible and a willingness to pursue biblical themes; a high regard for the cloistered life; a strong network of religious contacts and friendships; a sensitive concern for Reformed perceptions of sin and salvation, with their implications. These theological concerns and devotions began to be shown in her poetry which, after 1533, moved from the Neoplatonist themes of love for her husband to religious themes, including many expressions common to the circle of Valdés and other *spirituali*.

During the 1530s Vittoria strongly supported the Capuchin friars, a zealous and ascetic group that had broken away from the Observant Franciscans. The breakaway order had met with considerable hostility, but the *Cappuccini* had been protected by Caterina Cibo, Duchess of Camerino and niece of Pope Clement VII, and had been sanctioned as a separate order by Clement VII in 1528. Opposed to the Cappuccini, and indeed to most, if not all, movements for reform that might loosen the disciplinary powers of the cardinals in Rome, was Francisco Quinones, cardinal of Santa Croce, himself an Observant Franciscan, who had negotiated the release of Clement VII during the sack of Rome in 1527 and therefore had great influence in Rome. In a papal bull of April 1534, Paul III ordered the Cappuccini to return to the Observants whence they came, provoking a crisis in which the continuing support of Caterina Cibo and other women became crucial.

One of the reasons for Vittoria's defense of the order was that in 1534 she had met one of the Capuchin friars, Bernardino Ochino, for whose preaching she maintained a tenacious admiration. Ochino was an outstanding Catholic preacher and had been invited to cities to preach especially in lent or advent. He was ascetic and holy in appearance, with a pale face and thin, long beard, and delivered passionate sermons of Christocentric theology. He embodied the ideals of St. Francis perfectly and was greatly admired by the devout, including writers, poets, religious thinkers, and other clergy. The case of Ochino has prompted Elisabeth Gleason to ask why the ascetic ideal was so attractive at the same time as Protestant ideas were spreading, and she speculates that perhaps the predominantly humanist education of the Cappuccini gave particular quality and force to their preaching and their diplomatic work.⁸²

One answer to this question has already been suggested, namely the various reactions to Neoplatonist ascent theology. Another clue may very well lie

⁸² Elisabeth G. Gleason, "The Capuchin Order in the Sixteenth Century," pp. 31–67.

in the strong doctrine of the Spirit which both the friars and the women held at the center of their piety. It is possible that when doctrinal reconciliation faded, reform-minded lay women such as Caterina Cibo, Camilla Orsini, Vittoria, Marguerite, and others turned to the doctrine of the Spirit as pointing to a less institutional and spiritually deeper approach to the problem of encouraging the blossoming of fervor yet keeping due and decent order — what might be called the piety of the *lambrusque*. The Cappuccini were reformist and strict, their chief characteristic being, according to Cargnoni, not a new style of reform, but the way in which they posed and resolved the problem of how to harmonize the apostolic life with the contemplative life. They made sense of the gulf between the material and the spiritual worlds — the very thing that worried William Brewer, the Lollard in Winchester, about the “piece of bread” on the altar. The Capuchin approach to the problem was also important to the *spirituali*, especially Vittoria, because it gave scope to the free-ranging work of the Spirit in transforming not only the soul but also the world. This is why Vittoria supported them so strongly and why she intervened with Paul III when he tried to constrain them, being a “mother” to the order and using her influence with the pope to protect them.⁸³

It is this intermingling of the spiritual and the material through the free-ranging work of the Spirit that may provide other answers to Gleason’s question. Openness to the Spirit means openness to expressions of love and stirrings of self-abandonment. The paradigm was already there in the notion of the immensity of the gift of self-giving in the *Beneficio di Cristo*, but it had other sources in the teaching of Aquinas on openness to God and in Franciscan theology of the omnipotence of God. As Derrida points out, there is no question of reciprocity to a totally gratuitous gift, and for this gift, it is so enormous that any concept of exchange is impossible and relationships move “beyond economy.”⁸⁴ The gift has been given for the sake of giving and not for any gain, reward, or reaction — though in practice the recipient may react out of sheer gratitude and happiness, but that response is not really the reciprocity of economy. This nonreciprocal view of God–man relationship is Augustinian and also occurs in Protestant thought. One has to submit to the divine gift of the immense courtesy of God’s gift — the *Beneficio di Cristo* — to the human race; in fact, being able to submit without calculated thoughts of ex-

⁸³ Ibid., p. 35, who cites Costanza Cargnoni, ed., *I Frati Cappuccini: Documenti e testimonianze del primo secolo*, vol. 1 (Perugia, Italy: EFI, 1988), p. 21.

⁸⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 1–83. The point is applied by Alexander Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo and Vittoria, Colonna,” *The Art Bulletin* 29, no. 4 (December 1997): 651. Hereafter cited as “Gifts.”

change is itself a gift. Thus "faith" is not blind or irrational trust, but is the ability to accept love's gift. Such an ability to accept is itself a precious gift — that is why faith is also a gift of God, not a human good work, and why one outcome of faith is the abandonment of self to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit and to love of God. The Cappuccini were exemplars of self-abandonment in response to the love of God which knew no measure. It was self-abandonment through the Holy Spirit, it was a response of love, but it was contained in an orderly way within institutional bounds. The notion of self-abandonment through love warmed by the Spirit may be a further reason why asceticism was so attractive and also why the tract *Il Beneficio di Cristo* was so popular.

It is also possible that the doctrine of the Spirit appealed to women as a form of liberation from social constraints on their sex. Lay women's piety as conducted within the formal structures of the church, gave them little social opportunity for free-ranging expression of the creativity or their piety, but the Spirit could give them both religious freedom and religious passion. The potential riches of the Holy Spirit also attracted many monks and friars. These men also lived under great restraints but these were the voluntarily accepted restraints of an ascetic life. There was a fruitful tension between constraint — whether of social mores or rigorous monastic life — the subject matter of humanist studies, and the inward liberation of the Spirit. In the eyes of the women who supported them, the friars had voluntarily taken upon themselves a form of life which was not only constrained but was also a hard and highly disciplined life, both mentally and physically, but more than that it was a life that revealed the depth, richness, and sensitivities of men open to the life-giving forces of the Spirit and marked by achievements, for the friars worked hard in the apostolic field, preached, worked in diplomacy, and got things done. In short, they were the kind of men whom women could admire and with whom they could have some fellow-feeling.

The interaction of constraint and discipline, education, freedom in the voice of the Spirit and achieving good works was also the goal of the company of Ursulines, founded in Brescia by Angela Merici in 1535. The nuns lived separately and therefore had a largely unstructured community life of the active apostolate especially piety and works of charity and Christian education. The Rule encouraged the sisters to listen to the prompting of the Holy spirit, even when dealing with "obedience." Listening to the Holy Spirit was enriching but it was also unsupervised and potentially dangerous, and fifty years later Carlo Borromeo's revision of the Ursuline rule in 1585 greatly changed the nature of the community, reducing that encouragement to respond to the Holy Spirit by imposing constraints upon the nuns and

making the community more structured and subject to disciplined order.⁸⁵ The nuns were constrained but not subdued by such Tridentine discipline, and there is another example that suggests that the notion of a radically active Spirit inflaming, enriching, deepening, and transforming the soul appealed to religious women. In 1610 the newly established Community of the Visitation of Holy Mary was founded in Annecy. It was dominated, as one might expect from the community's name, by the work of the Spirit and contemplation, but in its first years it was also directed to nursing and other social works. Spiritual direction took place less by regulated formal exercises and prayers, and more by following the prompting of the Spirit, following the instincts of the *spirituali* that renovation begins within, in the heart, and secondarily makes itself known outwardly. Therefore, the reform of piety — individual or institutional — must begin with the conversion of heart. First love and then behavior, and the instrument for love is the movement of the Holy Spirit. Church authorities, however, had grave doubts about a non-cloistered and active order of nuns moved by the Holy Spirit and within four years they were cloistered.⁸⁶ This pre-Tridentine style of movement of the Spirit amongst women could not flourish freely in 1610, but it was in accord with the attitudes that Vittoria and Marguerite had held almost seventy years earlier.

The doctrine of the Spirit helps explain the poetry of Vittoria Colonna as it does also for Marguerite of Navarre. Rinaldina Russell has argued that the distinction between Marguerite's love and religious poetry is misleading because there is not so much a fundamental shift in her interests and thematic choices as a changing and developing continuity in her poetry. This continuum moves from the sorrow of the earlier lovelorn Platonic poetry to her religious reaching for the sublime heights of understanding and peace — a steady ascent of the soul to God. The Neoplatonist idea of a loving God recreating all matter and infusing it with faith, love, and hope increasingly dwells on Christ who strengthens the ascent with divine love that penetrates the soul, inflames it, and draws it toward God the Creator. This is a journey of vivification, in the midst of the troubled waters of human existence, lifting one above the "saggi del mondo, ch'hanno il cor sì duro." All Marguerite's poetry has that theme of ascent, which gives it a coherence, focusing away from the world, first to her husband and then to Christ, both being objects of

⁸⁵ There is an account of the Ursulines in Charmarie J. Blaisdell "The Ursulines," in *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation*, pp. 98–136. This point is on p. 119.

⁸⁶ Wendy M. Wright, "The Visitation of Holy Mary: The First Years (1610–1618)," in *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation*, pp. 215–250, especially p. 232.

her attainment reached by withdrawal from the world and by ardent love. In her poetry, love distances her from the world, first her human love and later her communion with God. Ferrante and Christ have the same structural function in her poetry, with the same style of pursuit — first the husband in Neoplatonic terms and then God in both ascent and evangelical terms.⁸⁷ Russell has made an important point, for it shows how the religious poetry that was obviously inspired by the evangelical teachings of Valdés and others is consistent with the affective monastic piety of divine and human love taught by Bernard of Clairvaux and others. Moreover, this analysis shows clearly that the continuing theme of withdrawal and ascent, from human to divine love, must have a source of power and guidance — a divine force that drives it. In the earlier love poetry that divine force is manifest in her natural human love for her husband, but in the later poetry the object of her love and the source of her ardor is Christ — “mio Sol d’eterni raggi.” The force increasingly becomes the Holy Spirit, which burns in her, creating the reciprocities of love in her and the church as a whole, so that “Volo, ch’i vidi la mia luce ardente/ Mostra più vivo il suo divin splendore.”⁸⁸

In 1534, when Paul III ordered the Cappuccini to return to the Observants, Caterina Cibo was not able to help because her family was in conflict with that of Pope Paul III, so Vittoria Colonna undertook their defense. The defense of the Capuchins found Vittoria locked in a battle of ecclesiastical politics with Quinones. In 1536 she wrote to Cardinal Contarini, who was then involved in the commission set up to review the defects of the Roman Church and to suggest reform. In her letter Vittoria made it clear that she believed that the Capuchin fathers possessed great spiritual strength and were exemplars of reform and that it was therefore of crucial importance that they be protected. It is not clear what steps Contarini took to defend the Capuchins, but Quinones continued to attack them with considerable perspicacity by concentrating on Ludovico Fossombrone, the erratic and autocratic General of the Capuchins. He adopted the Machiavellian strategy of encouraging the Emperor Charles V to express doubts about the Capuchins, and by this and other means to stimulate the latent personal ambitions of Fossombrone, with the intention of pushing him into excessive and unbalanced leadership of the order. This strategy of destabilization was outflanked by Vittoria, who, through the Pope, set the scene for the order of Capuchins to depose their unreliable general by having her brother Ascanio detain him in a family castle

⁸⁷ Rinaldina Russell, “The Mind’s Pursuit of Divine. A Survey of Secular and Religious Themes in Vittoria Colonna’s Sonnets,” *Forum Italicum*, 26 (1992): 14–27, especially 22–23.

⁸⁸ Pianto, Vittoria Colonna, *Pianto della Marchesa di Pescara Sopra la Passione di Christo* (Bologna: Antonio Manutio, 1557, hereafter cited as *Pianto*), pp. 49–53.

until he agreed to convoke a chapter of the order. This successful defense of the Capuchins revealed Vittoria Colonna to be a figure of considerable skill and power within the structures of ecclesiastical politics where power and influence were elusive and shifting forces.⁸⁹

In May 1537, in company with other female companions, she went to Ferrara, a city acutely aware of theological issues raised by the Reformation, particularly salvation by grace alone and the primacy of the Bible, and a city in which there were strong sympathies for the idea of reform of the Roman Church. John Calvin himself had been there the previous spring, and the duchess, Renata of France, the wife of Duke Ercole II, d'Este, was leader of those who sought reform. Indeed, in 1537, Ferrara seemed to be the city in which an ideological reconciliation between Rome and Reformation could possibly be hammered out. But this state of affairs put Renata's husband, the duke, in a difficult diplomatic position with Rome, and by the time that Vittoria arrived he may have welcomed her as a politically experienced, moderating and certainly a non-Protestant influence on his wife.

Vittoria seems to have been stimulated by the intellectual ferment of Ferrara, and abandoned an earlier plan to visit the Holy Land. In Ferrara during 1537 and early 1538 she heard the preaching of Claudio Jaio and Simone Rodriguez whose fervent spirituality made a strong impression on her. She met Bishop Giovanni Matteo Giberti, visiting from Verona. She held conversations with Ottaviano de Castello, suffragan bishop of Ferrara. She met once again the Capuchin friar Bernardino Ochino, whom she had met earlier in Rome in 1534 when she was campaigning in defense of the Capuchins. Ochino was now preaching in Ferrara, and Vittoria attended his sermons in which he expounded powerfully those themes of sin, grace, redemption with the human responses of faith, gratitude, love, and humility, which seemed to his thoughtful hearers to bring the fundamentals of Franciscan spirituality close to Reformation principles. Vittoria's own presence and reputation also made an impression on the populace of Ferrara, so that when Giberti announced during a church service that he had issued an invitation for Vittoria to visit Verona, the clamor of the people was so great that the celebration of mass had to be suspended. At the same time, Vittoria spent considerable time discussing questions of religious reform with Renata. These activities and discussions of 1537 and 1538 reveal a curious mix in Ferrara: a blending of the theology of the Reformation and the ideas and practices of the monastic life, a blending of popular sentiment with upper-class reform movements, an actively cooperative network of women and

⁸⁹ Gleason, "The Capuchin Order," pp. 36–37.

men striving for reform. This influential matrix of Ferrara in 1537 and 1538 also deserves more research.

It is possible, though not probable, that Vittoria met Marguerite of Navarre at Ferrara; certainly, they began to correspond about this time. The French queen and the Italian marchese had a great deal in common. They were two women of middle years, almost the same age, in their late 40s, both were well educated, accustomed to privilege and exercising authority, both were experienced and skillful in political matters, especially the arts of diplomatic influence. Both possessed creativity, sensibility, and style. Of course, like does not always appeal to like, but in this case their subsequent letters indicate a mutual attraction and trust, tempered by the courteous reserve and formality of language natural to a culture and generations different from our own. It is clear that Marguerite and Vittoria recognized in each other three very important qualities: They were both strongly committed to reform of the Roman Church from within it, they both possessed the theological understanding to guide that reform, and they both possessed political skill and power of the kind necessary for its accomplishment.

Early in 1538, Vittoria left Ferrara and went to Bologna where she again heard the sermons of Ochino the Capuchin. When Ochino was summoned to Pisa by Marguerite of Austria, widow of Alessandro de' Medici, Vittoria followed him, and from Pisa she went to Lucca where she joined Ochino in a coterie of religious reformers that also included Peter Martyr Vermigli and Pietro Carnesecchi. These events return us to two questions: the first involves Vittoria's admiration for Ochino's ideas. Considering that he became a Protestant, their friendship has to have some bearing on Vittoria's own religious position, especially since the orthodox *spirituali* who had shared his theology connived directly or indirectly with Ochino's apostasy, and may even have encouraged his flight.⁹⁰ The second question is multifaceted: Why was Ochino's ascetic ideal so attractive at the same time as Protestant ideas were spreading, why did a preacher of asceticism move so quickly to Protestantism, and what part did humanism play in the work of the Cappuccini — their preaching and their diplomatic work and other activities that seem at odds with the asceticism of their vocation? The speculative answer given in this introduction points to the Neoplatonism discussed earlier as one important element in the mix. The older teachings of openness and abandonment in Aquinas, the Franciscan teaching on the utter omnipotence of God which demands total abandonment, and Bonaventura's unity of the created world and the divine

⁹⁰ Gigliola Fragnito "Gli *spirituali* e la fuga di Bernardino Ochino," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 84 (1972): 778–813.

also provide explanation for these phenomena. Together, they make a theological cocktail in which transformation is crucial to salvation and they provide a matrix for a doctrine of the Holy Spirit that arouses love and self-abandonment.

In the meantime Vittoria continued to write poetry and to prepare her work for publication. During 1538 the first edition of Vittoria's 153 sonnets was published in Parma. This was followed by a Venetian edition and several other unauthorized editions, the publication of which indicate the popularity and market value of her works. Early in 1540 Marguerite asked Vittoria for some of the poems, via the French ambassador, M. le Rhodes, and in the summer of that year Vittoria sent her a gift of a manuscript of 102 poems bound with the arms of Marguerite.⁹¹ This manuscript was prepared by Vittoria's secretary Carlo Gualteruzzi, who was occupied at the same time in preparing a manuscript collection of her amorous poems to be sent to Francesco della Torre. Vittoria's love poems were fewer and less intense than her religious poems but the distinction was not clear-cut, for she blended the two realms: Human love was fired by Christian piety and her religious beliefs were strengthened by human emotions, and in both there was an underlying but unmistakable ardor. It was a combination almost certain to provide some evidence of suspect doctrine in anyone who searched assiduously enough for signs of heresy.

Unfortunately, when the volume arrived at the French court it fell into the hands of the Constable of France, Montmorency, who appropriated it from the courier before it could be delivered to Alberto Saccati, ambassador of Ferrara to the French court. Montmorency strongly suspected Marguerite of heresy (though he could not define the alleged heresy), and he now scanned Vittoria's sonnets in search of more precise evidence. He thought he found it in her allusions to living by faith which had a certain Protestant ring to them. He went to the king, Francis I, and denounced Vittoria as a heretic and, by implication, involved Marguerite. There was a tense scene, but Francis ignored the imputation against his own sister and Vittoria, which, after all was based on inconclusive evidence by a man intent on discovering heresy in high places.

Nevertheless, Vittoria was theologically vulnerable and her vulnerability was exacerbated by politics. Her defense of the Capuchins in 1536 and 1537 and her victory in the battle of ecclesiastical politics with Quinones had made her unpopular in some powerful circles. Then, in 1540 Vittoria's personal

⁹¹ Alan Bullock, "A Hitherto Unexplored Manuscript of 100 Poems by Vittoria Colonna in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence," *Italian Studies* 21 (1966): 42-56 (hereafter cited as "A Hitherto Unexplored Manuscript"); Sylvia L. Ansermin, "La poésie religieuse de Marguerite de Navarre et Vittoria Colonna" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Colorado, 1966), pp. 25-26.

rapport with Pope Paul III began to deteriorate in consequence of matrimonial and other conflicts between his family, the Farnese, and the Colonna family. Matters came to a head in April and May 1541 when Vittoria's belligerent brother Ascanio, waged a brief and unsuccessful war on the papacy from the family lands within the Papal States. In consequence, a great deal of the Colonna family wealth was confiscated, and Vittoria found herself in an awkward position concerning her religious beliefs and her support for reform.

It was in this context that we have the first batch of three surviving letters, written in 1540. The first is from Vittoria Colonna to Marguerite, from Rome, dated 15 February 1540 and in response to an earlier letter, now lost, from Marguerite. The second surviving letter, from Vittoria to Marguerite, is undated, but was very probably written a month or two later. It makes reference in the future tense to Vittoria's personal greetings to the queen being carried by Luigi Almanni, the Florentine poet. Since Almanni travelled to France with Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in May 1540, the letter may be dated as April or May of that year. The third letter in this batch is from Marguerite to Vittoria, written in Italian, which Ferrero dates as about 1540, but because it is rather relaxed and friendly it was probably written later in that year.

These three letters are all that remain of the earlier phase of correspondence between these two women. What do the letters reveal? Analysis of the letters is not easy, for very little is written directly and plainly, so that one must look to brief allusions and double meanings, frequently inserted into a relative clause or embedded in a biblical reference. The prose style of Vittoria was particularly obscure. One thing at least is clear, and that is the difference in their levels of self-confidence. Marguerite was robustly encouraging in the way she referred to "corrupt princes," her own faults, and the support she obtained from Vittoria's letters. On the other hand, in 1540, Vittoria's letters were diffident. This was due in part to her awareness of the difference in social rank, but more than that, Vittoria seemed beset by circumstances and her own sense of inadequacy. She speaks of the prevalence of evil clergy, and life being "confused" and "a long and troubled pilgrimage." She was referring both to her secular affairs, especially the family quarrels with the pope and difficulties with bureaucratic clergymen, and to her religious position, which was becoming more difficult in 1540 as the zealous Quinones intensified his suspicions of her in a context of increasing misgiving about heresy, closer surveillance by curious and often hostile eyes, and an increasing need for care in correspondence.

She and other *spirituali* were being pushed closer to the day when they would have to choose between heresy and obedience, but the external pressure was not the heart of Vittoria's difficulty. She had not made up her mind

what she believed: She and other *spirituali* understood and appreciated both the insights of Luther and the necessity of the Roman Catholic Church. They reacted to both, but despite having several firm religious principles and practices, they had no coherent religious position that could stand on its own in making the choice between the Reformation and Rome. The *spirituali* in Italy needed a theological alternative to the various forms of Protestantism which would also be a theological defense against hard-line heresy hunters such as Quinones. But, except in the monastic theology of the Benedictines, they did not have such a position, and Vittoria's two letters of 1540 reveal her anxiety and confusion.

In her letter to Marguerite of 15 February 1540, Vittoria wrote that "in this confused life of mine" we need a guide to show the way — "through teaching and with works to rise above our travail." She said how in her perplexity she had turned to leading women in Italy:

since the examples of those of the same sex seem more appropriate and meet to be followed, I turned to the distinguished women of Italy in order to learn from them and to imitate them. Although amongst their ranks I found many virtuous women, nevertheless I did not judge it appropriate for all other women to choose any of them as a model.

What she did not say was that she herself was seen by many — both men and women — as a guide for the *spirituali* in Italy: The difficulty was that she herself needed a guide, and that she now found it in another woman.

There is a hint here that the problems that perplexed her were problems that specifically required a woman's guidance. Vittoria appears to have built up an extensive network amongst members of her own sex. Now she was looking to Marguerite to give her the benefit of her experience and religious understanding because she believed that only Marguerite could do this — "in only one individual outside Italy were all the perfection both of will and intellect combined." There are also hints that she found that men, because of their positions, interests and ambitions, did not live up to her expectations. It is possible that she found women more sympathetic to the idea of change in the church than some of the male clergy with their aggressive suspicions of heresy, which sometimes went hand in hand with worldliness or even wrongdoing. In referring to her dealings with the clergy she speaks of "us who are now too accustomed to evil," but there were a few exceptions, notably the bishop of Ferrara, Ottaviano de Castello, the English Cardinal Reginald Pole, and Pietro Bembo who "was led late into the vineyard," that is, reform of the church. All men who possessed, in her opinion, sound judgment and a spiritual cast of mind were worthy of intimacy and knew what was meant by new birth in the Spirit.

Thus it appears that Vittoria Colonna, who had operated very effectively during the 1530s in the mixture of religion and politics, in her family's affairs and in defense of the reforming Capuchins, was now, in 1540, confronted with a situation in which her political skills were not enough. In her two surviving letters of 1540, she revealed her preoccupation with the interpenetration of spiritual and worldly realities, speaking with admiration of those such as Reginald Pole, "whose strength lies in heaven" yet "takes care of earthly things for the benefit of other people." She made a similar point to Marguerite—"you use human things in order to enjoy the divine, and you only journey amongst temporal things as one who is sure of eternity." In her letters this interpenetration of the material and the spiritual worlds was the basis of references to the virtues of humility, charity and courtesy, and the obligation of those "higher up the social scale" to use their "learning and gifts of intellect" and to reverence religion as "the supreme perfection of our souls."

In her letters of 1540 there is a brief suggestion that Vittoria viewed reform very much as an individual matter reached through personal intimacy by which one virtuous person brings both understanding and example to another person. Vittoria saw Pole in much the same terms of warmth, admiration, and a religious or spiritual perception of the world, as she saw Ochino, when she wrote that Pole was "sempre in cielo et solo per l'altrui utilità riguarda et cura la terra." The company of Pole seemed to be indispensable to her and when Paul III moved the young cardinal to Viterbo in September 1541, she also moved there taking a room in the convent of Santa Caterina. She was like a mother to Pole at a time when his real mother was executed in London on 27 May 1541.⁹² Vittoria exhibited the same warmth and intimacy in a striking passage in which she proposed visiting Marguerite.

my journey will certainly not be burdensome to me, since it will enlighten my mind and bring peace to my conscience; and I believe Your Majesty will not be displeased to have before her a subject towards whom she can exercise her two rarest virtues—that is, humility—because she will lower herself greatly in order to teach me; and charity—because in me she will find obstacles to the reception of her favour. But since very often children born in the most painful way are also the most beloved, I hope that afterwards, Your Majesty will have cause to rejoice in having brought me to birth with such difficulty in the Spirit, and having made me a new creature of God and herself.

The 1540 letters also reveal that Vittoria was aware of the intellectual

⁹² Benedetto Nicolini, "Sulla religiosità di Vittoria Colonna," *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni* 22 (1949–1950): 89–108, especially 105–106.

problems facing her in her long and troublous pilgrimage. She acknowledged the authority of Scripture and used biblical quotations with skill, but was also cognizant of the problem of the relationship between words and the realities they describe. This relationship between the sign and the reality, to be discussed later with reference to Michelangelo and Vittoria, was a problem in understanding the significance of paintings and what they portrayed, the consecrated host on the altar and the Body of Christ, and written words and the realities they signified.⁹³ This last matter particularly concerned both women, who were, after all, creative writers. Vittoria remarked that “reverent silence is appropriate to divine realities.” It was probably for this reason that she tended to avoid doctrinal statements, preferring to use the Bible for its imagery or paradigms rather than for its theological propositions, for example, speaking of the distant Marguerite “like the fire and glory of God on the mountain” and her possible coming into Italy like the coming of Christ “into the desert of our miseries . . . to all in Italy.”

Vittoria wrote in the opening lines of the letter of 15 February 1540, that it is silence as much as speech that leads to divine realities. This silence leading to divine realities suggests that we should search her letters for what is not said as well as what is said — the silent meanings that are indicated by hints, allusions, and asides. Moreover, silence is an aspect of mediation within that inner life which she praises in other letters. Speech is necessary as a social grace, and for making arrangements (such as for their meeting), and it brings order to the confusion that afflicts her, but silence is to be preferred. One of the most radical allusions is to that need for the “guide,” Marguerite to come to her, for at present she, Marguerite is far-off, and unattainable. The allusion is to the divine grace whereby God sees humanity in its plight, far-off, and comes to its rescue, bringing love, gifts, and new birth. Marguerite must come across the great gap to Vittoria, just as Christ came to the human race to rescue and redeem it. Despite her powerful position in Italian society, this is a lonely and troubled woman who needed intimacy and her need was expressed through allusions and powerful theological imagery.

For Vittoria, the authority of the Bible no more provided a solution to intellectual confusion than did papal authority *ex cathedra*. The individual person had to think problems through and develop in understanding and sensitivity. Consequently there is an emphasis in her letters on clarity of understanding. “Learning and gifts of intellect are held in high esteem” she

⁹³ Adriano Prosperi, “Zwischen Mystikern und Malern: Überlegungen zur Bilderfrage in Italien zur Zeit Vittoria Colonnas,” in *Vittoria Colonna: Dichterin und Muse Michelangelos*, ed. Sylvia Ferino Pagden (Vienna: Exhibition Catalogue, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1997), pp. 283–292.

wrote, adding an oblique rebuke to some highborn Italians, of her acquaintance, "all the more honoured when they are found in a subject of the highest rank." It is understanding that "arrives at the truth of the matter," she explained, and praised de Castello the Bishop of Ferrara for being a man "whose right judgment is clear in everything." It has already been suggested that this emphasis on understanding is an overlooked characteristic of some Catholic reformers of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries who considered skills of analysis and clarity — seeing the issues clearly and seeing them straight — to be essential to reform. In the case of Vittoria, such clear analytic understanding comes through personal discussion, wise instruction, and the Spirit who gives living force and invigorates the soul, and gives knowledge of divine things, so that, as quoted above, "birth with such difficulty in the Spirit (makes) . . . me a new creature of God and herself."

In summary, Vittoria's letters of 1540 to Marguerite indicate that she had not reached a position on justification, and in her perplexity on this matter wanted guidance, preferably from a woman, and certainly not from the general run of higher clergy. It also shows her strong sense of the mingling of the sacred and profane, particularly in the piety and friendship of her network of personal contacts and her search for personal understanding rather than imposed authority — understanding that was a rebirth brought about by the Spirit and through friendship — all to be expressed by prose distinguished by careful diffidence as well as the "reverent silences" amongst her words.

There are reasons for thinking that patristic sources strongly influenced these ideas expressed in her letters of 1540. Vittoria herself possessed a knowledge of patristic theology and was connected with several scholars of Greek. One of her closest intimates was Vergerio, who was a considerable Greek scholar and had published a translation of Chrysostom's *De Fato* in 1540. Another was Adamo Fumano, whose Latin translation of *Divi Basilii Magni . . . Moralia, Ascetica magna, Ascetica parva* included a long dedication to Vittoria in 1540.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Vittoria had contact with the Benedictines of Santa Giustina whose considerable revival of patristic scholarship had an impact on Italy that has not yet been fully studied. The Benedictines, with their Greek patristic scholarship and piety, were not the only group to provide a context for patristic theology. The Camaldolese monastery in Florence was a meeting place during the later fifteenth century for humanist scholars educated in Greek: It was from this monastery that the monk Nicolò

⁹⁴ Fumano's translation of St. Basil was published at Lyons, "apud Sebastianum Gryphium," 1540.

Malermi had published in 1471 the first complete translation of the Bible into Italian.

The one surviving letter of 1540 written by Marguerite to Vittoria is not as informative as the letters of Vittoria, for it is largely taken up with her insistence that outward appearances are deceptive and that she, Marguerite, has many defects, protests that have a slight edge as if Vittoria's praise of her had gone a little too far. However, these protestations could have been simply conventional expressions of modesty, and were possibly written to help bridge the social gap, to buoy their friendship and to encourage Vittoria to go on with her work for reform. In her concluding passage Marguerite alluded to their both being involved in a common task of reform, and that they needed each other's support and encouragement:

I may lose hope in my struggle, yet I don't want to lose that faith which gives victory to hope against hope, of which victory, through your good offices, God alone will have the glory and God will give you the merit for it. . . . For this reason it is necessary that you continue to pray and write your useful letters without becoming tired of sending them, since the friendship that was started by reputation has now grown so much because I have found it reciprocated in your letters, therefore I desire them [*sc.* the letters] more and more and I desire even more to hope to be so fortunate that in this world I can hear you speak of the happiness of the world to come; and if you think that I can please you in this world, I implore you my Cousin to use me as if I were your own sister, because I will so gladly satisfy you, even as I wish and hope to see you eternally in the world to come.

Your good cousin and true friend Marguerite,
Queen of Navarre.

Yet, despite this strong sense of their common task, Marguerite also writes about the gap between her social position and worldly power, and her inner sense of worthlessness:

as for my exterior appearance, God has placed me in such a condition that the abundance of my worldly gifts and my own unworthiness should make me terribly afraid; and as for my interior qualities, I feel just the opposite of your good opinion.

The answer to this inward desolation is to seek companionship and intimacy ("stable amicitia") with those who understand. Her search for ardent Christian intimacy was fraught with underlying anxieties which read like the sequences of a bad dream, when she explains how she desires

to abandon the place where I am and begin to run towards you; yet in so doing you remain far ahead of me that seeing the distance between us, I lose hope in my struggle.

That same search for close and sure intimacy was still there three years later when Vittoria wrote to Michelangelo, from Viterbo, probably in 1543. Indicating that with him she had found a sure friendship, Vittoria referred to "la nostra stabile amicitia et legata in christiano nodo sicurissima affectione."⁹⁵

There is a gap between the three letters of 1540 and the other two surviving letters of 1545. During this period of nearly five years the situations of both women changed considerably. The conference of Ratisbon in mid-1541 had been an occasion for strong though slightly desperate hopes of reconciliation between Rome and the Reformers, but despite a temporary agreement on justification it ended with flat disagreement about the sacramental efficacy of the Eucharist and confession. It seemed that the Reformers and Rome were in irreconcilable contradiction. Strategically minded Roman Catholics believed it necessary to forget about reconciliation, regroup around the Pope and to oppose and cut quite loose from Protestantism, which in Rome's eyes was more and more defining itself, and being defined, as heretical.

In France, after 1540, Marguerite faced a difficult situation in which the religious policies of her brother's royal government were intolerant of Protestants. In particular, the edict of Fontainebleau (June 1540) introduced summary procedures and widened the powers of civil and ecclesiastical courts in heresy trials. Trouble had been brewing for a long time. Several "heretics" had been arrested in Marguerite's country around Bordeaux during the late 1520s, including the colorful Thomas Illyricus who entered the city like Christ on a donkey in 1526; by 1532–1533 the city's Collège de Guyenne had "Lutherans" among its professors. A similar college was founded in 1535 at Agen, and almost immediately, the Parlement of Bordeaux sent a commissioner to investigate it. His report also referred to certain religious discussions he had heard at the court circle of Marguerite of Navarre in Nérac.⁹⁶ In 1539 the Collège de Guyenne instituted a new professor of theology who had connections with leaders of religious reform in the republic of Geneva. The new religion began spreading up the valleys of the Dordogne, Lot, and Garonne, to towns such as Ste-Foy, Villeneuve, and Tonneins.⁹⁷ By 1544, the

⁹⁵ Florence, Casa Buonarroti, AB, xi, Nr. 510, autograph. The date is 20 July 1543(?) from "monasterio di Viterbo."

⁹⁶ Henry Heller, *The Conquest of Poverty: The Calvinist Revolt in Sixteenth Century France*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 35 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), p. 106.

⁹⁷ Ernest Gaullieur, *Histoire de la Réformation à Bordeaux* (Paris and Bordeaux: H. Champion, 1884), pp. 22, 37.

president of the Parlement of Bordeaux was blaming the Collège de Guyenne for "the loss of all Aquitaine" to Protestantism.⁹⁸ Among those in that circle was Gérard Roussel from the abbey school of Clairac, one of the two ministers named by Jeanne in her letter of 1555; he had fled from Paris in late 1533.⁹⁹ In 1538, the Inquisitor Louis de Rochette came to Agen to investigate reports of heresy. At Tonneins, André Melanchthon, a nephew of Philippe, was arrested in 1541, but was saved by the intervention of Marguerite of Navarre.

By now Marguerite's politically and theologically complex situation was even more vulnerable to the aggressive simplicities of those who suspected her. There is evidence that the king himself was not particularly anti-Protestant (provided that law and order and his foreign policy were not affected), but he was under enormous pressure from his Privy Council, the *Parlement*, and the Sorbonne which began a ferocious counter-attack against Protestantism that consisted in part of intellectual argument and in part of book burning. By 1545 the diocese of Meaux had become a particular target because of its high incidence of Protestant practices and for the alleged culpable negligence of the bishop in tolerating heretical congregations. Although Marguerite and many of the clergy of the diocese of Meaux were sympathetic to Lutheran theology they could not properly be called Protestant. Nevertheless their position and that of *évangélistes* generally, became increasingly awkward.

In Italy, the situation between 1540 and 1545 became similarly difficult for the *spirituali*. Before 1542 the *spirituali* had dominated the movement for Catholic reform in northern Italian cities, with many preachers from Naples such as Ochino and Vermigli moving simultaneously toward some sort of theological understanding with Protestants and to rejuvenate Catholic spirituality. When the bull convoking the Council of Trent was published in May 1542, hard-line Catholics immediately increased their pressure on those who appeared to be sympathetic to the Protestant viewpoint. In July 1542 the Roman Inquisition was reestablished for "the preservation of the faith" and there were renewed suspicions of heresy, a concept increasingly seen to include those who continued to hold ambitions of understanding and reconcil-

⁹⁸ "En 1544 le second président du Parlement, de Calvimont, affirmait que le collège avait causé la perte de toute l'Aquitaine" Raymond Darricau, in *Le diocèse de Bordeaux*, ed. Bernard Guillemain (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), p. 102.

⁹⁹ Pierre Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, Tome IV [vol. 3], *Calvin et l'Institution Chrétienne* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1935), p. 22: "Nous savons avec quelle complaisance Marguerite de Navarre avait ouvert son université aux nouveautés intellectuelles"; on the circle of Queen Marguerite and Gérard Roussel, which also included Jacques Lefevre d'Etaples until his death in 1536, see p. 26. On Marguerite's court circle, Roussel, and André Melanchthon, see also Gregory Hanlon, *L'univers des gens de bien: culture et comportements urbaines en Angenais-Condomois au XVII^e siècle* (Talence: Presse universitaire de Bordeaux, 1989), pp. 211–213.

iation with Protestants. August 1542 was a time of crisis for the Italian *spirituali*, and the crisis deepened when Contarini died late in 1542, amidst rumors of his having been poisoned. In these circumstances, Vittoria came under greater scrutiny, as was also happening to Marguerite in France. After Contarini's death, the *spirituali* congregated around the residence of the Englishman Reginald Pole, who was papal governor at Viterbo from 1541 to 1545, and much more radical in his Protestant sympathies than Contarini had been. Vittoria Colonna was a member of this group from 1541 to 1544, where she was clearly a pivotal figure. The failure of Ratisbon provoked in Modena yet another attempt to bring about a doctrinal reconciliation: A formula entitled *Articuli Orthodoxae Professionis* set out a series of statements on papal authority, the sacraments, and purgatory, and made another effort to establish a *via media* of double justification. However, on the key issues of justification, grace, and sacraments this further attempt at settlement could not succeed any more than Ratisbon's formulae had succeeded, and the events in Modena merely provoked further hostility from Rome.

Some of the leading *spirituali* decided that no formula would ever reconcile the two differing concepts of salvation, and believed that they faced a stark choice. In August 1542 Bernardino Ochino, now Vicar-General of the Capuchin friars, fled over the Alps to Switzerland. A little later, Peter Martyr Vermigli, now the Augustinian prior of the monastery of S. Frediano of Lucca, another acquaintance of Vittoria, travelled up into Switzerland and also apostatized from the Roman Catholic Church. This double loss of two outstanding friars was a severe blow to Vittoria Colonna. She herself showed no sign of becoming Protestant, but times were changing, and hoping for reconciliation with the Protestants was no longer a Catholic virtue — indeed, it began to carry the smell of treachery. The new virtue was militant defense of Rome, and through the sharp eyes of the militant *zelanti*, the *spirituali* were looking more and more like appeasers. Despite the consternation at Ochino's flight and the possibility of the order being disbanded, Vittoria and cardinal Sanseverino urged the pope to pause and not act hastily. Then in August 1542 Contarini died. Within months, during the second half of 1542, the dominance of the pulpits had passed to the *zelanti*.

Nevertheless, some *évangeliques* and *spirituali* continued to hold their ground. One group was the Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua, the Cassinese Benedictines whose Antiochene theology of the Greek Fathers discussed earlier might have brought about reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants. Their theology lay behind the tract *Il Beneficio di Cristo* of Don Benedetto da Mantova, published in 1543, and it was also expounded when the Benedictines carried their struggle unsuccessfully into the Council

of Trent. Others who held their ground after 1542 comprised those in both France and Italy who were closely connected with Marguerite and Vittoria, such as Cardinal Pole who was the Protector of the Cassinese Congregation. Also, Giovanna d'Aragona, Duchess of Tagliacozzo, the estranged wife of Vittoria's brother Asconio, was being counselled by the Benedictine abbot of San Severino in Naples, and sometime during the spring and summer of 1545, the abbot wrote for Giovanna a tract on his Congregation's teaching on the "Beneficio di Cristo" and faith, "la fede viva," by which human beings are renewed and restored towards their original perfection until they come to participate in the divine nature.

In these circumstances, uncertainty about the possibility of Marguerite and Vittoria being crypto-Protestant in belief is understandable. The two women and many of their close acquaintances were deeply preoccupied with the twin religious question of the personal path to salvation and the institutional task of reforming the church so that it would become a living and effective agent of God's work of salvation, and their letters and other writings are saturated with these concerns. Not surprisingly, their contemporaries and most historians have understood the two women in terms of the questions raised by Martin Luther and developed by Protestant theologians and responded to by a range of opponents during the period between Luther's impact on the German Church and the opening sessions of the Council of Trent nearly thirty years later. What part can free will play in salvation, considering the alienating sin of fallen mankind? Can there be any saving merit in human works? Is salvation entirely by grace through faith alone? Does grace alone imply predestination, and if so is there a corresponding *certitudo electionis* by which faith holds with certainty to salvation? It is certain that the two women and their companions faced these questions and tried to accommodate Catholic theology and practices with the theology and practices of the Reformers and the governments of Protestant countries. When attempts by some Catholic reform circles to devise formulae were rejected, and as the church gradually hardened against such groups, some *spirituali* kept on trying but others accepted reluctantly that probably there would be no reconciliation.

Vittoria and Marguerite were concerned with these theological questions, but whatever the conclusions they reached, those conclusions did not drive them into the Protestant confession, for they lived and died within the Roman Church. If we are to continue to explore their religious beliefs we must consider more than the Reformation controversy questions of justification by grace through faith alone. One obstacle to this task, however, lies in their style of writing, which was poetic in flavor, oblique in references, and complicated in construction. This is particularly so with Vittoria, whose prose, in

contrast to much of her poetry, is frequently obscure. Emile Picot referred to "son mysticisme vague et parfois insaisissable," adding that her pen runs on into interminable phrases. Massimo Firpo has described her style as being difficult, requiring deciphering, cryptic, allusive, with a substratum of implicit references, often tortuous and fleeting. As for interpretation, Alan Bullock has neatly observed that because there is little concrete information "any deduction must of necessity be based on circumstantial evidence and a process akin to that of negative theology."¹⁰⁰

It is not surprising therefore that those who suspected Vittoria of heresy had their suspicions heightened by what she wrote, yet at the same time they could not be entirely sure from her writings whether she was heterodox or not. The difficulty was created by her use of poetry as a theological medium as vividly illustrated by the episode, mentioned earlier, when Vittoria sent Marguerite a gift of a manuscript of 102 poems in 1540. The manuscript had been prepared by Vittoria's secretary Carlo Gualteruzzi, who was at the same time preparing a collection of Vittoria's amorous poems to be sent to Francesco della Torre, secretary to Giovanni Matteo Giberti, the bishop of Verona, and a third collection of poetry to be sent to Michelangelo.¹⁰¹ When the manuscript arrived at the French court the poetry was perused for heretical tendencies by Montmorency, the Constable of France, who was notoriously hostile to Marguerite, an account of which Alberto Saccati, the Ferrarese ambassador at Marguerite's court immediately sent to the Duke of Ferrara. Montmorency had hoped to confirm his belief that Vittoria was a Lutheran heretic, but the poems yielded him only suspicious uncertainty.¹⁰² After Vittoria's death in 1547 an inquisitorial investigation arrived at a similarly uncertain conclusion, although perhaps, as Pagano has argued, for the different reason that the investigator was interested more in defending the faith than condemning particular persons.¹⁰³ The question posed by the inquisi-

¹⁰⁰ Picot, *Les Français*, vol. 1, p. 46; ed. Massimo Firpo, *Il processo inquisitoriale del Cardinal Giovanni Morone*, vol. 1, *Il Compendium Processum Sancti Officii Romanae* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, 1981), p. 84. See also Alan Bullock, "Four Unpublished Autographs by Vittoria Colonna in American and European Libraries, Together with New Data for a Critical Edition of her Correspondence," *Italia* 49 (1972): 45.

¹⁰¹ The poems sent to Michelangelo were published in a critical edition by Domenico Tordi, *Il Codice delle Rime di Vittoria Colonna, Marchesa di Pescara, Appartenuto a Margherita d'Angoulême, Regina di Navarra* (Pistoia, Italy: G. Flori, 1900). The manuscript sent to Francesco della Torre was discovered by Alan Bullock in Florence, Bib. Naz., II, IX, 30. See Bullock, "A Hitherto Unexplored Manuscript," pp. 42–56.

¹⁰² An extract of Saccati's two letters are printed in Ermanno Ferrero, *Carteggio di Vittoria Colonna Marchesa di Pescara* (Florence, Italy: Ermanno Loescher, 1889).

¹⁰³ Sergio M. Pagano and Concetta Ranieri, eds., *Nuovi documenti su Vittoria Colonna e Reginald Pole*, *Collectanea Archivi Vaticani*, 24 (Vatican City: Archivio Vaticano, 1989), pp. 23–62, especially pp. 60–62.

tors without success has also been the question posed by historians. Were the views of the two women simply sympathetic to the problems raised by the Reformers in regard to personal salvation and reform of the institutional church, or had they stepped over borders into heresy by accepting some or most of the Protestant solutions to those religious problems. Were the women merely reconcilers, or also strong sympathizers or even covert heretics themselves? These questions have been asked without success by both the inquisitors and historians because they were posed within the framework of the Reformation's theological problems and theological solutions, particularly the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone, and the Catholic responses to Luther and Calvin. That framework is not sufficient for an understanding of Catholic reform, and it is necessary to go beyond the questions of justification and faith, and their corollaries. The problems that both inquisitors and historians faced in defining the confessional stance of the women reflects the fact that Catholic reform was more than a response to Wittenberg and Geneva.

Once again, the complex personalities of Marguerite and Vittoria provide a key to their theological position. They were both poets and practical politicians, whose poetry and politics appear to have been affected deeply by their experience of marriage, death, and other crucial events during their lives. Much of women's lives were circumscribed by domestic environment, which in turn influenced their public lives, ideas, and writings — though it is difficult to make a detailed assessment of exactly how they were affected. The five remaining letters of the two women, together with some contextual material, suggest that we should consider their personalities, not only as they faced the dilemma imposed on them by Protestantism, but also as they faced away from Luther. They were sensitive to the problems of human sin and impotence articulated so well by Luther, but this sensitivity arises in part from their personal experiences rather than their being convinced by his doctrine of justification.

The complexity of their theological position derives also from pre-Reformation theological roots of Catholic reactions to Reformed theology in both Italy and France. For some time it has been apparent that the Reformation in Italy was based on more than reaction to the Protestant reformers. The debate has a long and intermittent history, but the most notable modern exposition of the view that the Italian Reformation was drawn from Protestant sources was Philip McNair's *Peter Martyr in Italy: an Anatomy of Apostasy* published in 1967. Since then, other historians have suggested or demonstrated two indigenous theological sources, which provided an alternative theology for those not satisfied with Luther's doctrines or with Rome's re-

sponses, and the legalistic emphases on judgment *coram deo* which both Rome and Wittenberg held in common. The first approach was in Italy, amongst the Benedictine monks of the Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua, the Cassinese, the order of which Cardinal Pole was the protector, who, as mentioned earlier had from long before the Reformation, possessed a spirituality based on Greek patristic theology, particularly the Antiochenes and most especially John Chrysostom. The second approach, which also tried to avoid the conflict between Reformers and the Roman Church over justification, was the doctrine of the Spirit. This approach had the beginnings of a revival in a particular form during the period of a generation or so before the Reformation, and was then developed by Briçonnet, but was pushed to one side by the controversies and schisms of the Reformation.

The Benedictine spirituality based on the Greeks, and the Spirit theology of Briçonnet and Marguerite, both placed great emphasis on transformation. The healing and sanctification of fallen human nature was the consequence of the washing away of guilt by the blood of Christ, and transformation was therefore a necessary part of the process of salvation; in fact, it was the human outcome, the point and the proof of the Cross. Transformation or sanctification was so entwined with justification that, at least in human terms, it was integrated with the Cross, and it was the substance of Christian life. The Spirit was the primary agent of sanctification — from baptism or the first stirrings of the sense of God, throughout life to the last breath of the dying Christian, and much of its work of sanctification was effected through the sacraments and quasi-sacramental agencies of the church. Both women retained pre-Reformation *spiritualité*, and they understood the necessity of sanctification and the way in which human nature was to be transformed: For these reasons their *spiritualité* is best understood as being wider than the Protestant-Catholic poles, and specifically as being oriented to the Holy Spirit.

The renewal of the doctrine of the spirit coincided with a change in religious attitudes, away from the civic religion of the late quattrocento — urban religious ritual of public processions, liturgies, relics and venerated saints of the city, confraternity chapels, private chapels, elaborate ornamentation — toward an individualistic religion. Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi argued that *Il Beneficio di Cristo* manifested the new sense of a direct relationship between the believer and God, and that the tract's enormous popularity indicates that a change was occurring in religious attitudes. This change in culture was also reflected in works of art, some of which converged with the new thinking of religious reformers, particularly its subjective emphasis, its preoccupation with the role of the believer's conscience in the movements of

faith, to the mutual benefit of both art and reforming ideas. Recently, Alexander Nagel and others have argued that this shift in religious attitudes is also revealed in Michelangelo's drawing of the *Pietà* which he gave to Vittoria as a gift, and which is an artistic manifestation of the *spirituali* emphasis on salvation by grace.¹⁰⁴

Michelangelo's drawing was a new category of artwork — a drawing that is a finished work of art in its own right, and a private gift, separate from the contractual system of artistic piety served by commissioned religious art — altarpieces for ceremonial endowments, paid masses, endowments, and so on. Being free of the civic-religious obligations imposed by the system of contractual art, works of art given as gifts were first secular, pagan works and then more often became religious works reflecting the new interior and individualistic religion that emphasized the direct relation between divine grace and the believer's conscience. It is unfortunate that the letters are undated and it is not certain to which works of art the letters refer but the dates are probably 1538–1541, though possibly 1545–1546. The former date is most probable since Michelangelo has been “offered some items (most likely poems) by Vittoria.”¹⁰⁵ As has already been noted, when Vittoria sent Marguerite a gift of a manuscript of 102 poems in 1540, the manuscript was prepared by Vittoria's secretary Carlo Gualteruzzi, who was at the same time preparing a collection of her amorous poems for Giberti, bishop of Verona, and a third for Michelangelo.¹⁰⁶ This would seem to date the letters more firmly during the earlier period, probably 1540.

Alexander Nagel has recently argued that the correspondence between Michelangelo and Vittoria reveal that his gift to her of a drawing of the descent from the Cross, and her gift to him of poems, not only both contain the theme of the new interior piety with its individualistic emphasis on divine grace, but are also significant in their being gifts. The letters illustrate this theological–artistic nexus in which the giving of works of art as a gift reflects salvation being given as the gift of divine grace. In the letters between Michelangelo and Vittoria, God's grace-gift of salvation is paralleled by his gift to her of the drawing in which the divine gift is expounded, and her gift to him

¹⁰⁴ There is a full account of this work and its relation to Vittoria in Sylvia Ferino Pagden, ed., *Vittoria Colonna: Dichterin und Muse Michelangelos*, pp. 311–478.

¹⁰⁵ This point has been drawn in part from Alexander Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna,” *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 4 (December 1997): 647–668. Hereafter cited as “Gifts.” See also Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi, *Giochi di Pazienza: Un seminario sul “Beneficio di Cristo”* (Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 1975), p. 187.

¹⁰⁶ The poems sent to Michelangelo were published in a critical edition by Domenico Tordi, *Il Codice delle Rime di Vittoria Colonna, Marchesa di Pescara, Appartenuto a Margherita d'Angoulême e, Regina di Navarra*. The manuscript sent to Francesco della Torre was discovered by Alan Bullock in Florence, Bib. Naz, II, IX, 30. See Bullock, “A Hitherto Unexplored Manuscript,” pp. 42–56.

also expounding the divine gift. Thus, Michelangelo elaborated "the nature and ethics of gift giving . . . in the language of the theological debate over grace."¹⁰⁷ The argument is neat, but not altogether sustainable. It is true that Michelangelo's drawing has theological content, exploring the meaning of the crucifixion, in the style of the *spirituali*, but the doctrines of the *spirituali* are not as individualistic as has been implied. The gift is not within the framework of civic contracts, but that does not make it an individualistic relationship in contrast to civic networks. The doctrine of justification by faith can be misleading. The Pauline doctrine that salvation (being justified in the judgment of God), is a manifestation of God's love for humanity, and is therefore, like all love, a gift of grace that cannot be earned through merit but only accepted with faith, is best understood not in the phrase "justification by faith" which Nagel uses, but rather more accurately as "salvation by grace through faith" in which the person must respond to the love gift of salvation, that is, accept the love with happiness, just as a loved one accepts the love of a lover — a human paradigm that Luther uses. Therefore, in contrast to civic piety, the piety of the *spirituali* was not so much an individualistic endeavor as it was a piety of a small intimate community made up first of self and Christ, but including friends, intimates, and like-minded persons, and ultimately others. For the *spirituali*, religion of communal coherence is not replaced by individualism; it is simply transferred on to a smaller and more intimate scale of a different type — a community of believers.

Michelangelo's reaction to Vittoria's gift was to accept it simply because of the way it was given. As with God's gift of grace he must abstain from resisting her gift because it is totally gratuitous. As Derrida points out, there is no question of reciprocity to a totally gratuitous gift. The gift is so enormous that any concept of exchange is impossible and relationships move beyond any calculation of economy. The gift has been given for the sake of giving and not for any gain, reward, or reaction.¹⁰⁸ Although in practice the recipient may react out of sheer gratitude and happiness, that sort of reaction is not really the reciprocity of economy. This nonreciprocal view of God-man relationship is Augustinian and also occurs in Protestant thought. In a sonnet in one of his letters, under the language of elaborate courtesy about Vittoria's "immense courtesy" in giving him a gift, etc., Michelangelo is also alluding to the immense courtesy of God's gift — the Beneficio di Cristo — to the human race, a gift that one accepts without calculated thoughts of exchange, as one

¹⁰⁷ Nagel, "Gifts," pp. 647–668, especially pp. 646, 649–650.

¹⁰⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, pp. 1–83. The point is applied by Nagel, "Gifts," p. 651.

accepts love. Such an ability to accept is itself a precious gift — that is why faith is also a gift of God, not a human good work. This account amplifies Nagel's rather brief account of justification theology, but his point still remains that Michelangelo and Vittoria connected art with religious discourse through the concept and the language of gift giving.

The creative works themselves also give us an entry into the cast of mind that saw faith as a love relationship. Cropper has argued that there was a connection between amorous language and painting. Petrarch's love poetry set up the relationship between the lover and the beloved, the *io* and *tu*, and this concept was reflected in high renaissance paintings which led the viewer to gaze upon the object of the work as a beloved object. To behold a painting was to behold a loved one.¹⁰⁹ Nagel argues that the nexus between the amorous and the aesthetic (with its beholder), was then extended to include religion, creating an amorous–religious–aesthetic nexus. To behold a painting may now mean beholding (experiencing) God's love, and amorous love, religious faith, and aesthetic pleasure are assimilated one to another. In 1997 Adriano Prosperi published an important article on the relationship between mystics and painters, and the relationship of image to reality in the time of Vittoria Colonna.¹¹⁰ Before the Reformation it was commonly held that the Virgin Mary is in some sense present in images, and acts through them in favor of the believers, and such teaching was the starting point for the images of the Virgin Mary with miraculous powers. Similarly, Jesus Christ is present in the holy Eucharist, which raises a question of the relationship between perception and reality which was carried on into Reformation debates about the consubstantiality of the host with Christ. Thus, many followers of the Reformation who affirmed before the Inquisition that the host is a symbol (*figura*) of Christ, denying the Catholic position that Christ is really present in the host, were actually speaking in terms of an image and reality that had roots in orthodox pre-Reformation Catholic piety. The controversy about whether the host was an image or the real presence of Christ, which became the focus of the confessional divisions of the church, was fundamentally a question about image and reality. As for images, they can be admired for their own sake, or lead to a deeper contemplation of the divine being. For that reason,

¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth Cropper, "The Place of Beauty in the High Renaissance and its displacement in the History of Art," in *Place and Displacement in the Renaissance*, ed. Alvin Vos, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, 132 (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), pp. 159–202.

¹¹⁰ Adriano Prosperi, "Zwischen Mystikern und Malern: Überlegungen zur Bilderfrage in Italien zur Zeit Vittoria Colonnas," in *Vittoria Colonna: Dichterin und Muse Michelangelos*, ed. Sylvia Ferino Pagden, pp. 283–292.

there was a shift in the attitude of the Catholic Church to commission paintings which led to contemplation and prayer rather than to the admiration of profane art.

In this context we can understand Vittoria's meditation on the passion of Christ commissioned by Bernardino Ochino, inspired by a work of Michelangelo. Her mediation put a strong emphasis on the term "vedere" (to see). What is new in her approach is that the act of seeing is not overlooked, but that the external perception leads to an internal contemplation that the circle around Pole valued so much. A similar approach can be seen in the way both women use "reverent silences" in their letters to indicate underlying realities. In all cases the Holy Spirit gave the spiritual wisdom that enabled the observer to see through the exterior representations to the underlying reality, and in the process the observer is, by the act of seeing, inspired, enlivened, and transformed.

In her letters, Vittoria describes the effect of Michelangelo's work on her in terms that were first grounded in human understanding, from which she moved on to a theological pronouncement, changing from Italian to biblical Latin. Looking at his work makes great claims on the viewer's faith and understanding. In these terms, faith as love is a faith that has understanding and conviction born of love's courtesy, intimacy, and self-abandonment. Thus the aesthetic experience and the religious experience both arouse intensity of feeling and conviction — an inner certainty, a knowledge, or *conosciuto*. This is the very point the Benedictine abbot, Luciano degli Ottoni was trying to make at Trent on 23 November 1546 when he was shouted down as a heretic: "if he believes, he believes with certainty that he is going to have eternal life."¹¹¹ This inner certainty, when the Spirit makes the Word of God speak directly to the individual conscience and consciousness of God, is the occasion of new birth.

The exchange between Vittoria and Michelangelo contains very physical, sometimes sexual, imagery and language. The more explicit suggestions of sexuality occur in Michelangelo's *Pietà* for Vittoria Colonna: The Virgin's face is beautiful and sensuous, and conveys, not distress but intense passion which in another context could clearly be taken for sexual passion. Similarly, Michelangelo's *Lamentation* depicts the naked body of Christ being passed into the arms of the Virgin who gives him what Nagel calls "a violently amorous kiss." In her response to the *Pieta*, Vittoria described the efficacious majesty of the dead Christ which gives understanding and sustains the faith of the believer through the pious effect of seeing the head of Christ in the arms

¹¹¹ Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars*, p. 202.

of his Mother. The closeness of the two bodies cause the “fire of love and torment” that flowed from mother to son and in turn animated the body of Christ giving it dignity and power, so that the ugliness and fierceness of death became beautiful. There is both pain and joy in her hugging of the child, and Vittoria writes with passionate and erotic language of how fire and love consume and penetrate the very inmost reaches of her own soul. Vittoria’s understanding of the workings of the Spirit is less explicit but what she writes about the body is a firm demonstration of her notion of the Spirit being more than intellectual or emotional, for the body and the spirit are entwined. Her emphasis on birth is partly in the medieval Marian tradition, but her sonnets contain more forceful linking of the natural and the supernatural, emphasizing the theological motif that through Christ’s yielding of his body — an act of total love — humanity is reborn and renewed and regenerated, represented as a virtual stirring of life within the dead body of Christ.¹¹² Similarly, in her sonnets Vittoria’s language reveals episodes of ardor, sanctity, inflamed souls of warmth and movement, “viva fiamma” and “foco divino accese l’alma,” “Gli alti trofei,” and “S’ à la mia bella fiamma.” Eleven years after her death, Corso captured her passion neatly when he says of “Con la Croce” that Vittoria, “already inflamed by divine love, commenced to be desirous to be able to follow the Lord.”¹¹³

Vittoria’s theology of the Spirit inflaming Christ’s physical body is seen most clearly in her *Pianto sopra la Passione di Cristo*. This small treatise contains several passages closely resembling Ochino’s *Prediche Nove*, delivered in Venice during Lent 1539, and published in 1541. He fled in August 1542. If there is a connection, then Vittoria probably wrote the treatise between 1539 and 1542. In the opening pages she wrote “del pietoso affetto di veder Christo morto in braccio à la madre . . . Veggo, la dolce madre, col petto colmo di ardentissima carità, con tante catene legata nell’amore del figliuolo, quante non si possono con la lingua nostra esplicare, nè la mente è capace di comprendere.” But there is still majesty in the dead body of Christ because it continues to show the divine gifts of the Spirit, “ferati gli occhi che gli davan perpetuo lume . . . la bocca chiusa, che spirava l’ardor del spirito santo.” The Spirit is still with the dead body of Christ, which as it is taken down from the cross, has dignity and divinity, such as “the wounded hands that fashioned the skies,” and “la bocca chiusa ove spirava l’ardor del spirito santo.” The

¹¹² Nagel, “Gifts,” p. 659. The *Pietà* is in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. The *Lamentation* is in the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

¹¹³ Rinaldo Corso, *Tutte le rime dell’Illustriss. et eccellentiss. Signora Vittoria Colonna, Marchesa di Pescara. Con l’Espositione del Signor Rinaldo Corso* (Venice: Giovan Battista and Melchoir Sessa, 1558), pp. 114–118, 394–397, 428–429; 433, 445–446, 467, especially 394; sonnets xix and lxi.

Spirit is part of the love of Christ shown on the cross "con chiaro intenso amore si arde & accende," with "burning love" and "overflowing love" which enables one to rejoice even in this pain. In the *Oratione Sopra l'Ave Maria* she writes of when Mary gives her assent "alla sapienza divina e allo spirito santo," the divine gifts pour into Mary and she is transformed.¹¹⁴

This is not a mechanical approach to faith and devotion, argues Nagel, but an incalculable wonderment at the generosity of God, with reciprocal opening up of the self to receive the grace given in open generosity. The point is well made, for Vittoria's understanding is exactly this kind of self-abandonment in reciprocal giving of the gift of grace and the self in response. It is a religious sensibility that comes much closer to Luther's early insights than to Calvin, even though Calvin is not without his appreciation of self-giving. In the case of Vittoria and Michelangelo, a marriage of religious ideals and aesthetic ideas is contained in this example of art being used as a gratuitous gift and therefore as an instrument of religious faith.¹¹⁵ In the same way, books were often given as gratuitous gifts partly because the knowledge they contained was seen as a gift of the Holy Spirit and as such stood apart from the market and market values, even though authors and publishers had to make a living from them.¹¹⁶ Gifts, especially of art and books, reflected in the human domain, with all its human constraints, that abundant, loving, abandoned self-giving of God, which had long been a characteristic of some Christian spiri-

¹¹⁴ *Pianto*, pp. 3–4, 9, 12–16. The first edition of the *Pianto* was that of Aldo in Venice in 1556. It is printed in Paolo Simoncelli, *Evangelismo italiano del Cinquecento* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, 1979), Documenti, 1, pp. 423–428. Under the editorial hand of Adriano Prosperi, a new edition appeared in 1997, which had been prepared, together with other material and historiographical introduction by Eva-Marie Jung-Inglesis in 1957, "Il Pianto della Marches di Pescara sopra la Passione di Christo," *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà*, vol. 10 (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1997), pp. 115–203. The connection between the *Pianto* and the drawing was noted by Alexander Nagel, "Michelangelo, Raphael and the Altarpiece Tradition" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1993); it was also noted by Emidio Campi, *Michelangelo e Vittoria Colonna: un dialogo artistico-teologico ispirato da Bernardino Ochino, e altri saggi di storia della Riforma* (Turin, Italy: Claudiana, 1994). The connection between the treatise and Ochino was also treated by Benedetto Nicolini, "Sulla religiosità di Vittoria Colonna," *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni* 22 (1949–1950): 96–97; by Eva Marie-Jung in 1957 (p. 139); and by Simoncelli in 1979. Prosperi has set the treatise in the context of reformist writings and reformist concerns about images in "Zwischen Mystikern und Malern," pp. 283–292. Micheangelo's connections with the *spirituali* are discussed by Moshe Arkin, "One of the Marys . . . : An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà*," *The Art Bulletin*, 79, no. 3 (September 1997): 493–517.

¹¹⁵ Colonna, *Pianto*, p. 3. Nagel, "Gift," pp. 663–665, refers to Colonna, p. 423. He is quoting from the modern critical edition of Paolo Simoncelli, *Evangelismo italiano del Cinquecento*, Documenti, 1, pp. 423–428.

¹¹⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth Century France," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 33 (1983), pp. 69–88, especially 72, 86–88.

tuality and which Luther tried to recover. The *spirituali* also sought this piety of abandonment, doing so with restraint. But the popularity of the *Beneficio* was such that it must have reached a wider audience than the *spirituali*. The notion of personal abandonment in response to God's own abandonment, with its subtle reverberations of both sexuality and the Holy Spirit, runs strongly through *Il Beneficio*, and may be part of the explanation of the tract's great success in so short a time. Moreover, since a spirituality of abandonment can be a dangerous thing for both an ordered church and an ordered state, this teaching of God's abandonment in his gifts, and the need for man's answering abandonment, was met with speedy and ruthless suppression of the tract.

The year 1545 was when the last two extant letters exchanged by Vittoria and Marguerite. The earlier of the two letters was written by Marguerite to Vittoria, probably early in 1545. It began with the familiar "My dear cousin," and expressed strong relief that reports of Vittoria's death which had reached France, were, after all, false. Using the Old Testament imagery of Genesis 45:26–28 she compared her relief to that of Jacob when he heard that Joseph was still alive — a theme that was reinforced with New Testament themes of death and living again.

my cousin and good friend is alive . . . in Him who is the true life . . . living in the new flesh of the Lamb . . . by whom you have been renewed in the spirit, walking in the new land, contemplating the new heavens, considering the old external order of things to be gone.

In this letter, the theme of renewal through the Spirit, to a new heaven and a new earth, was more prominent than references to reform through amendment of the higher clergy's faults. Her letter certainly referred to the faults of the higher clergy, "those who, far from being a triumph for the church are in fact a miserable ruin," and she certainly blamed the senior clergy for the errors of "Christian princes and people," who "despise and accuse them" for their faults. Nevertheless, her understanding of reform, though forcefully expressed, differed in two distinct ways from the usual "head and members" institutional reform through institutional discipline. First, reform begins with the individual person. Marguerite's view was not unusual, for it is similar to that manifested in the Oratory of Divine Love, which emphasized reform through all people by means of personal renewal which would then spread through other individuals and the institutions of the church. This view was in contrast with that of Carafa and the Theatines who argued that reform should take place from above, within church institutions, from which reformed and renewed ideas and practices would filter down through the

church hierarchy to the body of the faithful. Second, it is guided and fired by the Spirit, because all the redeeming work of God, all responses of the faithful, and all the work of sanctification are guided and energized by the Spirit.

At one level, the individual person fired by the Holy Spirit is moved to an inward and individual spirituality, almost solitary and separated from the world. External realities, Marguerite wrote, are ephemeral. One looks upon them, certainly, but it is necessary to keep one's gaze on God, and this is done by dwelling on the inner life. Some clergy who enjoy high ecclesiastical office avoid being corrupted by that success by this inwardness: These men are good examples to others because they keep the distinction between the interior and the exterior and do not allow the exterior to dominate them. On the other hand, those who let the distinction break down and who center their lives on achieving worldly success in the church are ruinous to themselves and the church. It is the depth and quality of the inward life that is important. Marguerite went on specifically to warn Vittoria against reliance on what is exterior or mortal. External things serve only a pedagogical function to blind sinners and bring them to God. External realities, she says in an obvious allusion to papal elections, are merely "a vapour or white smoke that lasts only for a small while and then vanishes." Others set their hearts on external power, and thereby polluted their bodies. Only inner illumination is important, and in this matter, she said "I implore you to take care." Reform comes through the Spirit and inner illumination: "renewed in the Spirit, walking in a new land, contemplating the new heavens, considering the old external order of things to be gone." In short, this letter of Marguerite in 1545 played down reform by the hierarchy, and warned Vittoria away from hoping for reform through ecclesiastical politics. The letter pointed away from institutional reform to renewal and restoration through the Spirit at work in personal religion, personalities, and networks in the situation in which they found themselves in 1545.

Yet at the same time, the individual lives in community — or rather, in a series of communities. Marguerite's notion of reform looked to the Spirit working through worldly personal networks. The clergy could be influenced by these networks of family, patronage and alliances, those very same networks, entwined with traditional Italian values of family and social obligation, which, as Barbara McClung Hallman and Gigliola Fragnito have shown, made the reform of nepotism and patronage almost impossible.¹¹⁷ The moral task of straightening the church with all its religious and political

¹¹⁷ Hallman, *Italian Cardinals*, pp. 164–168; Gigliola Fragnito, "Evangelismo e intransigenti nei difficili equilibri del pontificato farnesiano," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 25 (1989): 20–47, especially 40–44 on the networks.

implications was a task of exerting influence rather than imposing discipline and command, and it was a task to be carried out by networks and within a family rather than by institutional authority. The task was to be done by persuasion with good judgment and skill. In particular, it was a task that could best be done by women of the family. Indeed, it was virtually a maternal task. Thus, she commended the young cardinal d'Armignac to the care of Vittoria asking her as "my cousin and good sister to be a mother to him" so that "the temptations which assail him will not cause him to fall into the abyss in which all his equals have fallen." Hence, renewal of the church by the Spirit through individual people and personal networks was deeper and more effective than institutional discipline and ecclesiastical politics.

The last of the surviving five letters was written by Vittoria on 10 May 1545 at Rome. By this time her youthful looks had gone, but she was still a compelling and very serious older woman with beautiful eyes, as the Bronzino portrait shows.¹¹⁸ The prose style of this last letter is rebarbative, but it is possible that she, a poet capable of using words with skill, deliberately wrote in a tortuous fashion since her letter may have been read by prying eyes. She began with a formal salutation "Serenissima Regina," and referred to a number of letters having been delivered in person by Cardinal d'Armagnac. These other letters are now lost, but the text of this surviving letter makes it clear that Vittoria understood Marguerite's allusions to various approaches to "reform" and took them to heart. She made only passing reference to the forthcoming Council of Trent which might yet bring about reform within the Roman Catholic Church, and a brief allusion to her own declining political power. Instead, her principal theme was that of renewal through the Spirit which poured the power of reform into people "quel santo spirito che fa fluire si vive acque da lei." The term "vive acque" possibly came from Marguerite, who in turn had received it from Briçonnet—the "l'eau vive" of his letters to Marguerite from 1521.

Vittoria's understanding of the Spirit emerged clearly in this letter of 1545. She describes three works of the Spirit, all of which manifest the providence of God. The first work is when the Spirit authenticates and guides the church through history:

when the shadows show themselves to be so much greater, where we are, amongst those who understand those things which are the things of man, then so much more does the divine light show itself clearly through his holy prophets who understand those things which are of God.

¹¹⁸ Bronzino, *Ritratto di Vittoria Colonna*, in the De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco.

The second work of the Spirit is to effect the providence of God by creating channels of grace, both in individuals (not necessarily priests) and in networks of personal understanding and intimacy. Marguerite herself, wrote Vittoria, was a source of "deep living waters" which bear fruit: "in seeing you indeed one moves in Christ, and by revering you one dwells in the Spirit." The Spirit gives knowledge and understanding through others, so that faith is shared with considerable intimacy. For both women intimacy was a common theme within the doctrine of the Spirit. At Viterbo, wrote Vittoria, "I learned about the true homeland of the soul and . . . that more certain health of the soul." Similarly, it was the arrival of Marguerite's letters from France that caused her to be "freed and returned to a truly spiritual life." Indeed, the letters, she said, were "very often a source of grace for me." Then, knowledge and understanding given by the Spirit through friends led to "delight" and new life, for the divine realities "purify desire in this life and calm the soul that lives in the world": thus "joy and peace are the fruits of the Spirit." Similarly, the Spirit worked through Pole's group at Viterbo "la sua compagnia cristiana," and within this network by discussion, searching, or understanding (*raggiando*).¹¹⁹ The personal relationships involved in this matter were very strong — "pietose lagrime che . . . fecero . . . effetto in me," and "by revering you, one dwells in the Spirit."

The third work of the Spirit touched upon in this letter is renewal. This notion was present in Vittoria's poetry. In one rhyme she invoked the Holy Spirit

. . . al mio intelletto
 Quel chiaro raggio da cui fugge ogni ombra
 Onde la fiamma sua, che scaccia e sgombra
 Ben indurato gel, m'accenda il petto.

The invocation of the Spirit to illuminate the understanding and inspire the heart was the traditional sentiment of the *Veni Creator Spirits* and the invocation that Banco da Siena employed more than a century earlier in his famous hymn *Discendi Amor Santo*. In Vittoria's letter in the spring of 1545 there is no allusion to the once burning question of justification; she seems to have accepted *sola gratia* in one sense or another, but was now setting it aside to write of the renewal of human nature, toward that perfection from which she acknowledged herself to be still so distant: "Ma quanto più mi sento lontana da tal perfettione." In accepting *sola gratia* but also asserting the necessity of renewal and transformation of humanity — not for justification, but as the

¹¹⁹ In this context the verb "raggiare" can mean to understand something, realize, or even discover the truth.

sequel of justification — she may very well have been following Cassinese doctrine, for the most significant element in these letters of 1545 was a Benedictine doctrine of the Spirit as the direct agent not only of inner illumination but also of restoration of the image of God. But in 1545, whilst a doctrine of moving toward perfection was acceptable, in some quarters — even in virtuously anti-Protestant circles — expounding a doctrine of inner illumination could be dangerous, so Vittoria signalled caution to Marguerite, “when the shadows show themselves to be so much greater, where we are, amongst those who understand these things.” One who did understand “these things” was Michelangelo, and two years earlier Vittoria had written to him that because of their “ardent and humble” pious conversation before she left Rome, when she returned she expected to see him transformed by faith, “con l’imagin sua si rinovata, et per vera fede viva ne l’anima vostra.”¹²⁰ Now, in 1545, the suspicions of others gave an uncertain and cautious tinge to their letters. Uncertainty and caution do not make interpretation easy, but they were part of the context of the lives of these women and in their own way help us to understand their thinking during the mid- to late-1540s.

Within a year of the last surviving letter of 10 May 1545 being written, the Council of Trent was under way. Throughout 1546 those *spirituali* who still hoped for theological rapprochement with the Reformers over the questions of sin, guilt, grace, and justification, argued their case wherever they could, but it was a lost cause. The Benedictines of Santa Giustina, who attempted to bypass the presuppositions of legalistic western thought with Greek emphasis on renewal, were similarly unsuccessful. By the end of 1546, when Trent was making decrees in terms that virtually precluded all hope of reconciliation, an era had ended as the divisions between Protestant and Catholic hardened in a way that has altered world history. In France in 1545 there occurred the legalized massacre of the Waldensians of Provence, and in 1546 the frightful persecution of the small Reformed community of Meaux and humiliation of the moderate Catholic bishop. In 1547 Francis I died and was succeeded by his son Henry II, who, encouraged by his Constable, Montmorency and by his mistress, Diane of Poitiers, stepped up the suppression of heresy. In Italy, the Franciscan bishop, Dionisio Zanettini, a fierce vigilante in the cause of a different type of reform, to be achieved by different means from those which the two women sought, set out to hunt down Pier Paolo Vergerio, the Benedictines of Santa Giustina, Vittoria Colonna, and other suspect persons and groups, but with little success. Suspicions were one thing, but silencing

¹²⁰ Florence, Casa Buonarroti, AB, xi, Nr. 510, autograph, 20 July 1543 (?), “monasterio di Viterbo.”

the suspected ones was another. In 1546 the Venetian publisher Vincenzo Valgrisi, working from Vittoria's personal manuscript, brought out a book of her poetry. The volume represented her mature output, but by now she was near the end of her life. Vittoria died in 1547, reputedly discussing the Pauline epistles with Priuli and Flaminio on the day of her death. Her death almost coincided with the ratification of the decisions of the Council of Trent in January 1547, which, according to Firpo, doomed the ambitions of the *spirituali*.¹²¹ Two years later, in 1549, Marguerite of Navarre died. Her death coincided with what Simoncelli perceives as the decline of *spirituali* following Pole's failure to be elected to the papacy in 1549 due to the "virulent attacks of the Inquisition."¹²²

The texts of these five letters enable few firm conclusions to be drawn but they are nevertheless rich in hints and suggestions. Their voices are not bold or direct. They require the reader to follow subtle, half-hidden concepts, and allusive images and delicate nuances of expression — often reflecting the phrases and sometimes the silences of two people wishing to convey much though saying little. The letters of 1540 show signs of the considerable experience of both women in politics, especially ecclesiastical politics, and their perception of the need for reform of the clergy. The way in which Marguerite encouraged Vittoria to maintain and extend the link between them, and the way in which Vittoria responded shows how both women valued personal contact, friendships, support, and a transnational network of sympathetic people.

The letters also reveal that both women had a detailed and sophisticated knowledge of the Bible and biblical themes, and their piety possessed a strong sense of spiritual and supernatural forces intermingling with the natural world. Both women were sensitive to the vanity of human status and accomplishments which sharpened their sympathy for Reformed insights into sin and grace. Marguerite possessed a stronger doctrine of the Spirit which she had developed with Briçonnet, but Vittoria had never resolved the question of justification with its concomitant Protestant denial of the necessity of good works for salvation. She was aware that the notion of the necessity of sanctification presented great difficulty — but this is exactly what reform meant for both her and Marguerite — the real and necessary process of sanctification through the Spirit. For both women the starting point was their sense of sin and shortcomings and the necessity for rebirth which was not merely a consequence of the gift of salvation but actually part of the process of salvation, as

¹²¹ Massimo Firpo, "Il Beneficio di Cristo e il Concilio di Trento," pp. 45–72, especially 68.

¹²² Paolo Simoncelli, *Il caso di Reginald Pole. Eresia e santità nelle polemiche religiose del Cinquecento*, Uomini e Dottrine, 23 (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1977), pp. 59–74.

if God's acceptance of the sinner could not take place without the penitence of the sinner. Both women had a sense of the depth of human sin and inadequacy, and the necessity of the process of sanctification in salvation. The love of God which gives salvation came from outside, requiring no meritorious cooperation: As with the processes of birth, the rebirth of salvation also came from outside, requiring no active cooperation, yet requiring willingness to be swept along.

These kinds of imagery of salvation are poetic but also rich in human experience. Perhaps these two women understood and expressed these concepts particularly well. What is certain is that a strong doctrine of the Spirit as a warming and healing force is admirably suited to the theological questions of how God heals fallen human nature and how the new Adam comes to birth. The Spirit was not only the resolution of the Reformation controversy, but was also the necessary means of actual personal and institutional reform. It was for this reason that Vittoria sought guidance, first from women, but also from male friars and from sympathetic secular clergymen. Perhaps the two women looked to female expressions of spirituality because the habitual modesty of women engendered a realistic appraisal of human shortcomings. There are signs in the letters that they believed women to have a strong sense of both the shortcomings and the renewal of life — the birth imagery was particularly striking.

Vittoria's piety, as far as it is revealed in these letters, is marked by a certain indifference to the authority of the priestly hierarchy. Her spirituality is almost non-sacerdotal, expressed more in terms of personal faith of a kind that may be found amongst the laity as much as the priesthood. She found such faith amongst women and amongst friars (whom she revered for their intense vowed faith, not for their priesthood or their monastic life). Her Catholic reformed piety, which certainly had pre-Reformation roots, was spirituality for the laity, but modelled on monastic ideals: It was a monastic-lay piety concerned with perfection both in persons and in groups. This spirituality is congruent with Vittoria's emphasis on personal intellectual understanding. During 1540 she seems to have been faced with a crisis of vocabulary, being not entirely clear what is meant by "faith," "grace," and other key terms, but knowing that it was a crisis that could be resolved only by personal clarification and understanding, that is, by discourse and explanation rather than by the imposition of authority. This approach also has pre-Reformation roots, for example in More's *Utopia* and in the writings and policies of Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester.

There are themes here that may clarify our understanding of what was going on amongst Catholic reform movements on the eve of Trent: a monastic-lay

spirituality; a concept of authority drawn not so much from Scripture or the *magisterium* of the church, as from clear personal understanding; an emphasis on the Spirit; a turning to patristic, especially Greek, piety. The letters of 1545 retained these earlier elements of Catholic reform and even more than in 1540 disregarded reform by the hierarchy or through ecclesiastical politics. The signs of lay-monastic spirituality were stronger than before, though the monastic contribution was muted—probably because of the defections of Ochino and Peter Martyr—and it included a greater concern for personal contacts and networks, for it was more obvious in 1545 than it had been in 1540 that trustworthy friends were vitally important. The lay-monastic piety in the 1545 letters also revealed a strong emphasis on sanctification involving rebirth and renewal of humanity through the Spirit. There is a need for historians to consider such connections with the pre-Reformation past and how they are connected with the *spirituali* and *évangéliques* as responses to Luther.

The shift from more civic to more individualistic religious practices, described by Prosperi and Ginzburg, also needs closer scrutiny. Civic piety actually went hand in hand with personal piety, and they were two distinct things. Personal piety was in a theological sense quite different from the communal and worldly ethos of civic piety. It was the piety of separation from the material world. During the earlier fifteenth century, piety concentrated on individual interior discipline with little or at least a restrained use of reason or imagination or application of the soul's condition to the exterior world. The emphasis lay upon retreat from the world, to embrace poverty, to practice mortification, and to invigorate religious devotion with the liturgy and pious readings. This retreat from the world was permanent for those under religious vows (with greater or lesser intensity according to the order concerned), was occasional for the laity, and was somewhere between for the parish clergy. Thus a civic spirituality that entangled the material and the spiritual worlds publicly and simultaneously went hand in hand with an inward spirituality that entangled the material and the spiritual worlds privately and not simultaneously. In the context of retreat from the world, the Spirit first deepened the individual's religious consciousness of God and response to grace by illuminating the mind and inflaming the heart in an intensely private, almost lonely way. Only then were the fruits of the Spirit carried into friendships, groups, the church, and society at large.

The move from civic religion to a more individualistic piety meant that the latter began to acquire certain characteristics of the civic piety from which it had been quite distinct in the past. During the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the younger years of that generation which grew to adulthood by 1517, individual piety was increasingly associated with one's sur-

roundings. The ideal of living the monastic style of life remained but it remained with a greater sense of living within the material world, with an enhanced sense of transformation of the world within which the spiritual life was lived, including a sense of social reform, which included church reform. Piety became less a matter of retreating from and shutting out the world, and more a case of the soul withdrawing to contemplate, but from within that withdrawal pursuing holiness with imagination and with the kind of reasoning that focused on specific problems of both individuals and society. Individualistic piety's retreat from the world was now in a different context. The Spirit reformed, improved, and deepened religious consciousness, illuminated the mind and inflamed the heart in an intensely private way, but with social application. The distinction between worldly and religious was being realigned.

There is in these letters a strong sense of loneliness, of being apart, or being an outsider, one born to commune with God and of being open to the spirit—not necessarily a hermit, on the contrary often destined to try to change things through networks and in a very public way—but a solitary person nevertheless. As piety increasingly became the simultaneous contemplation of eternity and reflection upon the world, religious devotion employed reflection and imagination to analyze problems of the human condition and to formulate answers relating to the salvation of self and the world. It was not that piety became more worldly because of some sort of rise of the laity as opposed to the monastics. In fact, the style of piety changed for almost all—monastics, parish clergy, and laity, but it did become more methodical, activist, problem-centered, analytical, and at the same time more imaginative. The most notable example is Thomas More's *Utopia* of 1516, but there are numerous other examples to demonstrate this shift in the style of piety from the later fifteenth century.

This piety of separation from the world, but spiritual involvement in a world in need of reformation, flourished from the 1490s but especially after the religious crises of the Reformation. The Council of Trent and the Jesuits systematized the new piety, *mutatis mutandis*, and it continued to flourish in orders such as the Ursulines and even in more traditional monastic life, including the Cassinese Benedictines. Its integration of the spiritual perceptions that needed to develop and to apply itself within a worldly context required a method of prayer and devotion. Indeed, methodical style of piety was developed, notably by the Jesuits, and flourished until the seventeenth century when Augustine Baker led a reaction that returned to the piety of retreat—the individual's lonely embracing of poverty, mortification, a culture of sacredness and learning and purely affective contemplation as had been

practiced by English, Spanish, and Flemish ascetic authors of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

It has been argued that *spirituali* who decided not to break with Rome were then faced with the problem of mediating between inner certainties and an institutional church life that they found unsatisfactory. Their answer was to fall back on individual conscience and retreat into spiritual inspiration and experiences rather than theological doctrine, being careful and prudently respectful of the established church, and living their religious lives in a kind of aristocratic detachment.¹²³ Undoubtedly this is so, but this introduction has argued that we should also look beyond doctrinal adherence. Doctrinal formulae had not achieved what had been hoped of them, for doctrinal confession, like ecclesiastical obedience were not at the heart of the matter. Their withdrawal to an interior and individualistic religion was partly a withdrawal from an Italian Reformation doomed to fail, but it was also a move to a richer and deeper spirituality than they had found either in Protestantism or in Rome's responses to Protestantism. Their withdrawal into an individualist piety was not entirely negative. It was a new and positive road reopening before them, and transformation through the Holy Spirit was a means of fulfilment.

The importance of the Holy Spirit in the beliefs of the two women suggests that their religious journey, what Vittoria called their "long and troubled pilgrimage" was not a progression of spiritual development from human love to divine love, or from Catholicism to the borders of Protestantism: It was a search for transformation in which the Holy Spirit played a crucial part. Recently Gigliola Fragnito has put forward an argument that Vittoria's pilgrimage was not an inner progression of her spiritual development but a subtle and complex series of responses to people and ideas that affected her, such as Cavalca's *Specchio di Croce*, Ochino, Marguerite, and others. Ochino and Pole "infected" her with justification *sine operibus* by grace alone, which she embraced, but she was not converted to Protestantism.¹²⁴ These five letters suggest that Marguerite encouraged her to return to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Her doing so was never a mystical retreat in which she used poetry to express her faith as it had developed in Viterbo and her frustration with Rome, but it was another route to the search for renewal, growth in love, self-abandonment and above all, transformation. Personal sanctification rather than the justification or acceptance by God had been the goal of the two women all along. After taking what could be taken from Protestantism's doc-

¹²³ Massimo Firpo, "The Italian Reformation and Juan de Valdés," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27, no. 32 (1996): 353–364, especially 358–359.

¹²⁴ Gigliola Fragnito, "Die religiöse Heterodoxie in Italien und Vittoria Colonna," *Vittoria Colonna: Dichterin und Muse Michelangelos*, ed. Sylvia Ferino Pagden, pp. 225–234.

trines of the helpless sinner, utter grace — the *Beneficio di Cristo* — and God-given gift of faith, they still sought for transformation of the sort that only the burning lover of the Spirit, directly within her soul, could give her. They had sought transformation in human love, transformation in writing poetry, transformation in acknowledging her sinfulness and in the accepting of the *Beneficio di Cristo*, but the heart of the matter was always transformation. In the end that could only come by the Holy Spirit. There was not progression in their beliefs, only a series of searches and increasing understanding of self. There was no progression toward Protestantism, only a taking in of its deepest insights, because from their earliest years both Vittoria and Marguerite sought transformation of the kind that could only be achieved with the interior visitation of the Spirit.

In conclusion, these five letters justify at least the speculation that pre-Reformation Catholics viewed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a solution to the problem of the “dead heart” of the church, which had failed to reform itself, both from its head down to its members, as well as from its external structures and practices to its interior life. The doctrine of the Spirit was a response to the disillusionment of many concerning the church’s failure at reform, but it was not a response of direct protest and greater agitation for reform. It was rather a response that sought for understanding of both the problems and the means of solving those problems. The doctrine of the Spirit came to be viewed as a means for implementing both personal and institutional reform and for securing theological reconciliation with the Lutherans, as well as the last hope in preventing a schism. Perhaps this led to an ambiguity which Firpo perceives between their religious intensity and deep political weakness, an ambiguity which was more of a hindrance than a stimulus for protest and reform, and which paralyzed their hopes of reform.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, the Spirit may provide an important key to understanding the mind of some key protagonists of the Catholic reform movement, for this doctrine combined fifteenth-century ideals of retreat and inner spirituality and the later view of the Spirit as manifesting itself in the material world through human efficiency and institutional reform. That is, the older view of the Spirit as illuminator of the soul and mind was amalgamated with more recent ideas of the Spirit as empowering rational skills. The Spirit was an active and creative force on two levels: as light or fire of the soul as well as animator of worldly pursuits, human activities, and endeavours, including the organization and reform of the church.

¹²⁵ Massimo Firpo, “Il *Beneficio di Cristo* e il Concilio di Trento,” pp. 45–72, especially 69–70.

To a large extent the doctrine of the Spirit provided *spirituali* and *évangéliques* with an answer to the dilemma of having to choose between heresy and obedience by shifting religious belief to another level, away from the vexatious problem of salvation, almost rising above the doctrinal controversies of the day. The letters of Vittoria and Marguerite are best understood not merely in terms of the Reformation doctrinal controversies surrounding questions of sin and salvation, but in a wider sense — especially chronologically and theologically — of religious history. When they are considered in terms of the doctrine of the Spirit, the letters reveal a great deal more. The letters themselves are not conclusive evidence of the importance of the Spirit in the Catholic Reformation but they point to discernible themes that need to be investigated more thoroughly. The letters are a first step in uncovering and establishing the role of the doctrine of the Spirit as manifesting itself in the material world through human efficiency and institutional reform to resolve doctrinal conflicts and to nourish personal as well as institutional reform. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit during the early sixteenth century may provide an important key to understanding the mind of some key protagonists of the Catholic reform movement.

Appendix A

List of Known Letters between Marguerite d'Angoulême and Vittoria Colonna, Together with Details of their Provenance and Publication

There are five surviving letters, three written in 1540 and two in 1545:

1. Vittoria Colonna to Marguerite d'Angoulême, 15 February, 1540
2. Vittoria Colonna to Marguerite d'Angoulême, March, 1540
3. Marguerite d'Angoulême to Vittoria Colonna, late March, 1540
4. Marguerite d'Angoulême to Vittoria Colonna, January, 1545
5. Vittoria Colonna to Marguerite d'Angoulême, 10 May 1545

Letter 1.

VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME
15 February 1540

SALUTATION AND OPENING:

Sereniss. Regina. Le alte et religiose parole della humanissima lettera di V. Maestà mi dovriano insegnare quel sacro silentio, che in vece di lode s'offerisce alle cose divine . . .

DATES AND LOCATION:

Rome, 15 February 1540; the Brescia MS has "Di Roma, alli XV de Febraro [*sic*] del M.D.XL.," though the date is omitted from *Lettere Volgari di Diversi Nobilissimi Huomini e Eccellentissimi Ingegni Scritte in Diverse Materie, Libro primo* (Venice; Manuzio, 1542).

MANUSCRIPT AND EARLY PRINTING:

Brescia, Biblioteca Quiriniana, E VII 16, copy of the first half of the sixteenth century. *Lettere Volgari*, 1542, c. 126v–127v, and in editions of 1545, 1564, 1567.

MODERN EDITION:

Text and context are summarized in Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre, 1492–1549. Étude biographique et littéraire*, 2

vols. (Paris: Champion, 1930; reprint, Geneva: Slatkine, 1978), 1:247–249. Hereafter cited as *Marguerite*.

Printed in Domenico Tordi, *Carteggio raccolto e pubblicato da E. Ferrero e G. Müller. Con Supplemento di Domenico Tordi* (Turin: Loescher, 1892), pp. 185–188. Hereafter cited as *Carteggio*. This version includes the date in the Brescia MS, which has mistakenly ascribed the MS to the seventeenth century, although the hand is clearly earlier. The error is corrected in Paul O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, vol. 1 (London: Warburg Institute and Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963), p. 36. Hereafter cited as *Iter*.

There is a summary in French in Pierre Jourda, *Répertoire analytique et chronologique de la correspondance de Marguerite d'Angoulême, Duchesse d'Alençon, Reine de Navarre, 1492–1549* (Paris: Champion, 1930), letter 798, pp. 180–181. Hereafter cited as *Répertoire*.

Letter 2.

VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME

March, 1540

Salutation and opening:

“S.ma. M.tà. Stimano gli huomini molto la dignita regale, massimamente quando viene da lontano per antica progenie. . . .”

DATE:

Rome, March 1540. See Verdun-Louis Saulnier, “Marguerite de Navarre, Vittoria Colonna et quelques autres amis italiens de 1540,” *Mélanges à la mémoire de Franco Simone: France et Italie dans la culture européenne*, vol. 1, *Moyen Age et Renaissance*, Centre d'Études Franco-Italien (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980), pp. 281–295, 284–285: “Je ne saurais m'enhardir à vous écrire, sinon sur votre commandement” (“se de sua parte non mi fosse stato comandato”) (l'allusion répond à la lettre précédente). Elle ajoute “Luigi Alamanni supplirà per me con V.M.” Ainsi elle a chargé le poète d'aller faire commission de sa part à Marguerite. Nous sommes donc au moment où Alamanni quitte Rome pour revenir en France. Dès lors on peut préciser: la lettre a toutes chances d'être de mars.” See also Saulnier, 293, nn. 17, 18. Also, Auguste Emile Picot, *Les Français*, vol. 1, pp. 44: “l'autre [lettre] est écrite quelques jours ou quelques semaines plus tard [after letter 1], au moment où Alamanni quittait Rome pour revenir en France.” See also under Letter no. 3.

MANUSCRIPT AND EARLY PRINTING:

Brescia, Biblioteca Quiriniana, E VII 16, fasc. 2, fols.5–6v. This letter was not printed in *Lettere Volgari*.

MODERN EDITION:

Carteggio, pp. 200–202.

Répertoire, letter 800, p. 181, has a summary in French.

Letter 3.

MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME TO VITTORIA COLONNA

Late March, 1540

SALUTATION AND OPENING:

No salutation is recorded, and the letter opens with the words "La vostra lettera, Cugina mia, m'ha portato tanto di contentamento, vedendo in essa la vostra tanto desiderata affettione dipinta vivamente. . ."

DATE AND LOCATION:

From, Paris, though possibly Abbeville, March 1540. Saulnier, p. 284 gives detailed reasons for the March date: "La lettre 800 [Letter 2] pouvant être datée de Mars . . . la présente doit être du début du même mois. En Mars, Marguerite est à Abbeville (ou Noyon); la lettre a dû joindre Vittoria à Orvieto." The Brescia MS, however, ends with "Di Parigi ecc.."

It is not clear whether this letter follows or precedes letter 2. In the Brescia MS, however, it has been copied after letter 2, with the heading "Risposta dalla Regina di Navara," thus suggesting that it is the reply to letter 2. This order seems to be confirmed by internal evidence: In letter 2, Vittoria asked "People have a great concept of regal dignity . . . how should I dare to write unless I believe that such a wonderful building has as its foundation stone, humility?" [Letter 2:10–11]. This was probably the provocation for Marguerite's allusion in letter 3: "I appreciate, my Cousin, the fact that you have taken as a stable foundation that humility by just telling me what I am in the image that the world has of me and that is concerned only with my noble status and temporal appearance, rather than what you value as being within me?" [Letter 3:12–16].

MANUSCRIPT AND EARLY PRINTING:

Brescia, Biblioteca Quirinale, E VII 16, fasc. 2, fols.1–1v.

Lettere Volgari, 1542, 125v–1264v, also the editions of 1545, 1564, 1567. Picot, *Les Français*, vol. 1, p. 44, says of the 1542 edition that "elle a sans doute subi quelques rétouchés." This volume uses the text of the *Lettere Volgari*, but amended in accordance with the Brescia MS.

MODERN EDITION:

Carteggio, pp. 202–206.

Répertoire, letter 799, p. 181, has a summary in French.

Letter 4.

MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME TO VITTORIA COLONNA

January, 1545

SALUTATION AND OPENING:

"Cugina mia. Mi è paruto, havendo ricevuta la vostra lettera, ch'io debbia dire quel che disse Iacob . . ."

DATES:

c. 20–25 January, 1545. No location is indicated.

Répertoire, pp. 218–219, 284, “[Fin de 1544. Debut de 1545].”

Saulnier, p. 292: The letter “Accompagne 985 [of the *Répertoire*] (où Marguerite charge d’Armagnac de présenter la présente lettre à sa destinataire). Donc: vers le 20–25 Janvier 1545.” Georges d’Armagnac became a cardinal on 19 December 1544. Also, Picot, vol. 1, p. 44.

MANUSCRIPT AND EARLY PRINTING:

“Quinternus Litterarum Marchionissae Piscariae”; Città del Vaticano, Archivio del Sant’Offizio, now the Congregazione per la Dottrine della Fede, Stanza Storica, E-2-e, fasc. 9, fols.602r–603r; also N-4-d fasc. 1, fols.n.n.

Camerino, Biblioteca Valentiniana, MS 79 [III R 1–15], fols.144r–147r; second half of sixteenth century.

MODERN EDITION:

Sergio M. Pagano and Concetta Ranieri, eds., *Nuovi documenti su Vittoria Colonna e Reginald Pole* (Vatican City: Archivio Vaticano, 1989), letter viii, pp. 111–115; they use MS E-2-e, fasc. 9, fols. 602r–603r, and their version has been followed in this compilation. Hereafter cited as *Nuovi Documenti*. Bartolommeo Fontana, “Nuovi Documenti Vaticani intorno à Vittoria Colonna,” *Archivio della Reale Società Romana di Storia Patria*, vol. 10, fasc. 3–4 (Rome, 1887), pp. 595–628, pp. 34–36 of the separately printed booklet. *Carteggio*, letter CLXVII, pp. 289–292.

Auguste Emile Picot, *Les Français Italianisants au xvi siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1906, 1907; reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 45–46, printed in full with minor variations on the *Carteggio* text. This is the only letter of the two women printed by Picot.

Répertoire, letter 984, p. 219, has a summary in French.

There is a summary in Jourda, *Marguerite*, pp. 301–302.

The MS containing this letter is listed in G. Mazzatinti, ed., *Inventari dei mss delle Biblioteche d’Italia*, vol. 1, fasc. 1 (Turin: L.S. Olschki, 1887), p. 27, MS 50, “Traduzioni italiane dei salmi, poesie e lettere di Marcantonio Flaminio,” without specific reference to the letter. The Camerino MS is also listed in Kristeller, *Iter*, vol. 1, p. 39, also attributed to Flaminio.

Letter 5.

VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D’ANGOULÊME

10 May 1545

SALUTATION AND OPENING:

“Sereniss.ma Regina. Vedendo con quanta cortesia et amore vostra M.ta si allegra della vita mia, . . .”

DATE AND LOCATION:

Rome, 10 May 1545. The letter is dated "Di Roma alli x di Maggio 1545."

MANUSCRIPT AND EARLY PRINTING:

Città del Vaticano, Archivio del Sant'Offizio, now the Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Stanza Storica, E-2-e fasc. 9, fols.606r–607r; also N-4-d fasc. 1, fols.n.n.

MODERN EDITION:

Sergio M. Pagano and Concetta Ranieri, *Nuovi Documenti*, letter ix, pp. 116–118, using Vatican E-2-e fasc. 9, fols.606r–607r. This version of the text is used in this compilation.

This letter is not printed in *Répertoire*, nor in *Carteggio*.

LOST LETTERS

Several letters between the two women have been lost. There are references to a number of such letters but specific indications of only three.

1. 1540, January, from Marguerite to Vittoria. There is a note of this lost letter (numbered [797] in *Répertoire*) in letter 798 of *Répertoire*, pp. 180–181 (that is, letter 1 of this compilation), which is a response to the lost letter.
2. 1540, July or early August, from Vittoria to Marguerite, a letter accompanying the MS of poems sent to the queen. The MS of poems, preserved in Florence, has been described by Alan Bullock, "A hitherto unexplored manuscript of 100 poems by Vittoria Colonna in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence," *Italian Studies* 21 (1966): 42–56. The poems fuelled speculations that the two women were inclined to heresy, and the episode led to great care being taken in their subsequent correspondence. There is an allusion to this lost letter in a despatch of the Ferrarese ambassador; see *Carteggio*, pp. 203–205. *Répertoire* numbers this lost letter as 806.
3. 1544, end of the year, from Vittoria to Marguerite. There is an allusion to this lost letter (numbered [983] in *Répertoire*), in letter 4 of this compilation (that is, *Répertoire*'s letter 984) to which it is presumably a response. See *Répertoire*, p. 219. Also see Saulnier, "Marguerite de Navarre, Vittoria Colonna," p. 292, who dates it thus ". . . Tres peu de jours après que d'Armagnac soit fait cardinal (19 decembre 1544). Donc, daté vers le 20–25 decembre 1544." Vergerio wrote to Vittoria that Marguerite has showed him Vittoria's letter and they had discussed it at length (*Lettere Volgari*, 1542, 128r). This would have been the lost letter.

TRANSCRIPTION

For the most part the letters have been transcribed with the original spelling, but some revisions have been made for the sake of clarity. Also, the v form has been altered to u, and punctuation amended as necessary. Capitals, accents, and apostrophes have been inserted or deleted as appropriate.

Appendix B

English Translations of the Letters

Letter 1.

FROM VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, ROME
15 February 1540

Most distinguished Queen,

The lofty and pious words of Your Majesty's most kind letter should have led me to that reverent silence which leads one to divine things rather than to praise; but fearing that my devotion would be taken for ingratitude, I shall dare not so much to reply, as to refrain from keeping silent in all things, and only to lift up, as it were, the counter-weights of Your Majesty's celestial clock, so that through the virtue of its chime, it may mark the time and bring order to the hours of this confused life of mine, until God grant me that I may hear Your Majesty speak of that other life, in person, as I am led to hope. And if such infinite good grace is granted me, then my intense desire will be satisfied.

This yearning has been lasting. In this long and troubled pilgrimage of life we need a guide to show the way — through teaching and with works — who invites us to rise above our travail; and since the examples of those of the same sex seem more appropriate and meet to be followed, I turned to the distinguished women of Italy in order to learn from them and to imitate them. Although amongst their ranks I found many virtuous women, nevertheless I did not judge it appropriate for all other women to choose any of them as a model. In only one woman outside Italy were all the perfections both of will and intellect combined; but as she was of such high rank and so far away, I was consequently saddened and filled with fear — like the Jews who were seeing the fire and glory of God on the mountain top, which they, as yet imperfect, did not dare climb; and in the silence of their hearts they asked the Lord that His Deity, becoming incarnate in the Word, might condescend to draw near to them (just as in spiritual needs the merciful hand of the Lord met their entreaties, first with the water spilling miraculously from the rock, then with the heavenly manna), so Your Majesty took steps to com-

fort me with your most sweet letter. And as with the Jews the outworking of God's grace far exceeded all their expectations, so to me the benefits of seeing Your Majesty will I feel, exceed anything I may desire. And my journey will certainly not be burdensome to me, since it will enlighten my mind and bring peace to my conscience; and I believe Your Majesty will not be displeased to have before her a subject toward whom she can exercise her two rarest virtues — that is, *humility* — because she will lower herself greatly in order to teach me; and *charity* — because in me she will find obstacles in my ability to receive her favor.

But since very often children born in the most painful way are also the most beloved, I hope that afterwards, Your Majesty will have cause to rejoice in having brought me to birth with such difficulty in the Spirit, and having made me a new creature of God and herself.

I cannot suppose how Your Majesty could see me before her. The only explanation is that she, because of her very noble nature, turned back to call me, and for this reason saw me from afar and before her. Or maybe, as the servant John preceded our Lord, so it please God that I may similarly serve as that voice, which in the desert of our miseries proclaims to all in Italy to prepare the way for the desired coming of Your Majesty. But while this coming will be postponed because of your high responsibilities, I will speak about it with the most revered Bishop of Ferrara, whose right judgement is demonstrated in everything and mainly in the very fact that he deeply respects Your Majesty. And I will be pleased to see in this man the virtues of such high degree that they seem in their excellence to be those of olden days — very new for us who are now too accustomed to evil.

I often speak about these subjects with the reverend Pole, whose conversation is always in heaven and who only turns his glance earthward for the benefit of others; and very often with the most reverend Bembo, who is so keen to work in this vineyard of the Lord, that although he was led there late, he deserves the fullest reward without murmurings from anyone. I do my best in order that all my thinking will begin and end within the frame of this matter, so that I may receive a little of that light (the light of God's grace) which in the fullness of the mind's journeys, Your Majesty so clearly discerns and deeply honors. May Your Majesty day by day deign to add lustre to this precious pearl¹ because she knows so well how to share and impart her splendor and in storing up treasure for herself, she makes us rich also.

I kiss your royal hand, and I humbly commend myself to your grace for which I long.

¹ In the original there is a play on the word here translated as "pearl": "... si degni illustrare ogni giorno più si pretiosa margherita . . ."

Letter 2.

FROM VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, ROME
March 1540

Most High Majesty,

People set great store by royal dignity, especially when it is of ancient lineage; and even more so when this dignity is coupled with the virtue required by such high rank. Similarly, learning and the gifts of intellect are held in great esteem, and they are all the more honored when they are found in a subject of the highest rank. But above all these things religion is to be revered, since it exists as the supreme perfection of our souls, particularly amongst those of high rank, through whom the people may benefit from the value of their example.

How should I dare to write to Your Majesty when you possess, in such high degree that I cannot express, all the virtues I have mentioned above, unless I had been ordered by you to do it, or how should I dare to write unless I believe that such a wonderful building has humility as its foundation stone? I confess therefore that I have revered you in my mind for so long that I had formed such an image of Your Majesty through faith that it was necessary to make it effectual through a work of love, without trust in anything of mine, apart from that which Your goodness grants me.

I shall not make so bold as to offer my frail service to such greatness, because I have no desire to exalt myself (as I would do if you were to deign to accept it), and since I know that human matters lead to the fruition of things divine, and that one only passes through the temporal, being near certain of Eternity. You would never find anything in me that would serve such a lofty aim as you pursue, unless my lowly state and lack of virtue were to give me the opportunity to discover even further your noble courtesy—although I fear that when your understanding arrives at the truth of the matter, it will realize that there is nothing in me worthy of being remembered by you; and eventually the affection which in Your goodness you offer me will be lost.

Master Luigi Alamani shall speak on my behalf with Your Majesty, whose royal person may our Lord God keep in His grace. From Rome.

The most devoted servant of Your Majesty
Vittoria Colonna

Letter 3.

FROM MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME TO VITTORIA COLONNA
Late March 1540

Your letter, my dear Cousin, has brought me so much happiness, and so great and so vividly expressed was your affection that my joy made me forget the heaviness that I should feel within me since my qualities are the opposite to those you

praised in your generous judgment of me: a judgment which is merited and esteems anyone who is like yourself. And if it were not for the fact that you know how it is with corrupt princes, who — it is said — are more readily corrected through false praises rather than by pointing out their actual defects, I should not understand your charity toward me. But such ignorance is transformed into certain knowledge of the love you bear me and shows me the difference that exists between worldly and external triumphs and honors, and the beauty and loveliness of the daughter and true spouse of the one and great King, God, which are interior and well-hidden qualities. And it seems, dear Cousin, that in order to create this firm foundation of that rock of humility, you could not have found a better way than to describe me as I appear in the eyes of the world, which is concerned only with temporal nobility and appearances, and which you esteem me to be within. However, I confess that as for my exterior appearance, God has placed me in such a condition that the abundance of my worldly gifts and my own unworthiness should make me terribly afraid; and as for my interior qualities, I feel just the opposite of your good opinion, so much so that I wish I had not seen your letter, if it weren't for the hope I feel through your good prayers which spur me to abandon the place where I am and begin to run toward you; yet in so doing, you remain so far ahead of me that seeing the distance between us, I lose hope in my struggle. However, I do not want to lose that faith which gives victory to hope against all hope, of which victory, through your good offices, God alone will have the glory and God will give you the merit for it. For this reason it is necessary that you continue to pray and write your useful letters without becoming tired of sending them, since the friendship that was started by reputation has now grown so much because I have found it reciprocated in your letters. I therefore desire your letters more than ever, but my greater wish is to be so fortunate as to hear you speak in this world of the happiness of the one to come. If you find that I can serve you in any way in this world, I implore you my Cousin to use me as if I were your own sister, because I will so gladly satisfy you, in the same way that I wish and hope to see you forever in the world to come.

Your good cousin and true friend
Marguerite, Queen of Navarre

Letter 4.

FROM MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME TO VITTORIA COLONNA

C. 20–25 January 1545

My dear Cousin,

When I received your letter it seemed good to me to repeat what was said by Jacob, who gave no other answer to his sons when they told him that Joseph reigned in Egypt (thinking that they had invented this piece of news in order to make him happy), but when he saw the chariots full of gifts sent by Joseph he

believed and said — “This is enough for me to know that my son Joseph is alive.” So I, my cousin, having mourned your death, although I had no doubts about your happiness, I nevertheless thought of the unhappiness of those for whom your presence is so necessary (among which number I count myself), and I remained for a number of days unable to believe that you were recovering. But then, when I received your letter, where I seem to hear your voice and feel your spirit conversing with me, I was obliged to say — “This suffices, and praise be to God that my cousin and good friend is alive” — alive, I should say, in Him who is the true life.

As to the flesh, I believe you died long ago, and that your Adam with all his desires died and was crucified in our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom and for Whom you died and rose again, living in the new flesh of the Lamb — who died before the Creation of the world, by Whom you have been renewed in the spirit — walking on a new earth, contemplating the new heavens, considering that the old external order of things has passed away, because what is exterior will come to an end, and nothing will last except that which is interior, so much so that no mortal thing is worthy of desire by those who have their heart set on the Eternal God and the enjoyment of His Eternity.

For this reason I am certain that you, when contemplating the external realities (which God made in order to blind sinners and that they may serve as a ladder for his elect [chosen ones] to reach the knowledge of His immense power, wisdom and goodness) you judge them for what they are — namely, a vapour, or white smoke that lasts only for a small while and then vanishes as when the tears of loss are supplanted by the hope of recovery. Indeed, anyone who knows those external realities for what they are cannot set his heart on them, and those who do not set their heart on them do not pollute their bodies with them, because while looking at and listening to all these things they keep their gaze fixed on God, who speaks and works through His creatures. They do this with the singular vision, whereby God is seen in all things, and the body is made full of light, so it sees nothing in the darkness of this world except the light that shines there. Such are your eye and your heart, to which I send my most affectionate greetings, as well as those of Mons. Cardinal d’Armagnac.

The honor of his being made a cardinal did not give me as much pleasure as the joy I felt in receiving your letter, where you say that the glory of this world has not changed him — something which I see is very unusual at such levels. Therefore I pray you my cousin and good sister to be to him as a mother in my absence, by making him partake of those mercies that God has granted you, so that the temptations that assail him will not cause him to fall into the abyss into which his other peers have fallen — namely, those who, instead of being a triumph for the church, are in fact its wretched ruin.

If the ministers of the church would follow in word and behavior those of

whom they claim to be the successors, the Christian rulers and people would amend their own mistakes, and the criticism of those who despise and accuse them would be silenced. But since they live as they do, if men keep silent, the stones will cry out. May God grant that this one whom I nourished to obey His holy word and good will may be found in the number of His elect, knowing that at all levels of society there are members of the elect who have never bent the knee before Baal. I have great hope in God's goodness and in you that if you see him fall because of human frailty, you will tell him as a true friend and will correct him as a good mother. This I pray you to do, in the same way that I would wish you to care for my own well-being.

With this trust I pray God, Who can do whatever He wills, and Who desires our good more than we ourselves could ever do, that He may ever be for you what He already is, namely true life and salvation, spiritual health and consolation; and I pray that you will continue to keep me in your friendship.

Your good cousin, sister, and friend,
Marguerite

Letter 5.

VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE OF NAVARRE; ROME

10 May 1545

Most Serene Queen,

When I consider with how much courtesy and love your Majesty rejoices in the fact that I am still alive, I should accept such graciousness as a clear sign for me to keep my life sheltered in the protection of the Lord, in whom your Majesty herself continually lives, in such a way that if I had experienced within myself the feeling of being dead in the flesh, as you believed to be the case, I would not hesitate to attribute my recovery to the effects of true faith, as your Majesty, so lovingly and for love alone, says in your letter to be the case.²

But the more distant I feel myself to be from such perfection, so much more do your powerful words excite my desire; I hope that the Holy Spirit, which makes deep living waters flow forth³ from you, will ensure that such waters shall not be entirely without fruit in my field, even though I know that since your own roots are deeper, with you it shall bring greater fecundity. I give endless praise to God,

² The prose style of Vittoria's first paragraph is extraordinarily convoluted and difficult to follow, which is surprising in such a distinguished poet. Translation into English was accordingly very difficult. I consulted Mr. Valerio Lucchesi of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, who kindly wrestled with its obscurity, and suggested that the meaning of the passage may be: "Considering the kind words with which you congratulate me for my recovery, I should resolve to adopt a totally Christian way of life; and if I really thought that I have had a miraculous escape, I would not hesitate to attribute it to my virtue, as you so kindly seem to believe."

³ This expression used by Vittoria had possibly come from Marguerite, who had first received it from Briçonnet as his "eau vive"; see *Correspondance*, vol. 1, nos. 81, 86.

who always provides for my needs like the kindest of fathers, for having now allowed me to receive your Majesty's letter in time, before the most reverend Cardinal Pole departs as legate to the Council. On the few occasions that I have had the opportunity to talk with him, he shows me his own letters from your Majesty. During my serious illness I was in Viterbo, the place where he had his legation, and there I was able to have conversation with him and with his Christian company: Thus, whilst in foreign exile, I learned about the true homeland of the soul, and whilst enduring the weakness of the body I learned of that more certain health of the soul. I attribute this to the pious tears that your majesty condescended to shed for my death. These tears had no less effect on me than those other tears had on Him for whom Christ groaned in the Spirit.⁴ For this reason, it is indeed most necessary to be freed and returned to a truly spiritual life: And so, now that I am remaining here, your Majesty's letters are most necessary for me. No better plea could be made to the most reverend d'Armignac than to plead with him that I wish to read them often, and to pray constantly to God that His reverence will understand their meaning and delight in them: And I humbly give thanks to the Divine Majesty that when the shadows show themselves to be so much greater, where we are, amongst those who understand those things which are the things of man, then so much more does the divine light show itself clearly through His holy prophets who understand those things which are of God, amongst whom your Majesty stands, resplendent through your words and your deeds—which must suffice for me, who is so far away from the high place in which God has placed you. But because truly belonging to divine realities purifies desire in this life, and calms the soul that lives in the world, we must therefore never cease to desire the things of God—so long as we have not yet attained the enjoyment of them—in which is found the true peace and the true goal of every desire. I shall always greatly desire to see your Majesty, even though by seeing you indeed one moves in Christ, and by revering you one dwells in the Spirit. Since joy and peace are the fruits of the Spirit, I can only say that this desire causes me anxiety, greatly hoping that our good father⁵ either being in Milan or in some other way will provide for my need to meet you in person, as he has condescended to provide for my unworthiness by showing you to me by means of your letters, which are of so much consolation, help, and strength in my weakness, which your Majesty knows so well, as surely as I know it myself. The letters will very often be a source of grace for me, for which reason I shall often pray to God, who alone is able to move you and console me, and who is pleased to perfect in your Majesty such wonderful graces, and ever fulfill in me his every wish.

From Rome, 10 May 1545

Your Majesty's humble servant, the
Marchesa of Pescara

⁴ "... in quello, nel quale Christo infremuit spiritus."

⁵ Cardinal Georges d'Armignac.

Appendix C

Biblical Citations and Allusions

Brief as they are, the letters given an insight into the writers' knowledge of the Bible. Clearly, Marguerite d'Angoulême and Vittoria Colonna had much more than an educated humanist's acquaintance with the Scriptures. Amongst these two women and other *évangeliques* and the *spirituali* the frequent occurrence of Biblical allusions — direct references and quotations — reflects an intimate knowledge of the Bible's text and its meaning, in effect denying stereotypes of the inadequacy of the Catholic laity, especially women, in comparison with Protestant familiarity and knowledge of the Scriptures.

Letter 1.

FROM VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, ROME

15 February 1540

- 2–3 *quel sacro silentio . . . alle cose divine* may be an echo of Rev. 8:1, the silence that followed the opening of the seven seas. Given the other likely reference to this passage at lines 20–23, the allusion seems likely. Cf. Elijah meeting God at Horeb in 1 Kings 19:11ff., where God is found in the silence.
- 9 *tanta gratia infinita* is a strong Pauline reference, typical of the language of the Letter to the Romans. The parallels with Lutheran doctrines of justification should be noted, but need not be overstated since such views were common enough in Italy before the Reformation.
- 10–12 *il qual e stato . . . a superar la fatica* refers specifically to 1 Tim. 4:6–16, but reflects the many New Testament emphases on doctrine (*didaskalia*: teaching, instruction). Vittoria Colonna sees the importance of Christian living of right teaching — the Word — and “examples,” that is, good works.
- 20–23 *che hebbero . . . approssimarsi ad essi* refers to Sinai and the glory of God on the mountain, Exod. 19:16, 20:18ff. These refer, as the passage from 1 Tim. 4, to the fear and distress of the human soul being met by the maj-

esty and grace of God. Note also Rev. 8:8—"something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea" (after the second trumpet). Cf. reference to Rev. 8 at lines 2–3 above.

- 23–26 *et come in quella . . . con la celeste manna*: The water from the rock reference is Exod. 17:1–7. The incident takes place at Horeb (cf. reference to 1 Kings 19 at lines 2–3). See also 1 Cor. 10:3b–4 (a direct reference)—"and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ." Also Ps. 105:40–41, Ps. 114:8. The manna reference is explicitly from Exod. 16:4, 15, 31–36. Allusion is also possible to manna references at Num. 11:6–9, Deut. 8:3, and John 6:31ff., which incorporates the Bread from Heaven discourse. The last reference is particularly noteworthy for its strong emphasis that it is not anything the disciples can do, but God's grace alone that gives eternal life. The allusion spans both Old and New Testaments, and alludes to the debate about justification current in Italy.
- 26–27 *et se a quelli l'effeto . . . loro aspettatione* continues the allusion to 1 Cor. 10:13, which reads "no testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone."
- 28–30 *et certo non mi sarà . . . la mia coscienza*: Vittoria Colonna is still troubled in her conscience, while still seeking enlightenment of mind, that is, teaching, or knowledge—in the terms of Hosea—my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Through enlightenment she looked for spiritual comfort and tranquillity.
- 33–36 *Ma essendo usanza . . . et sua nova creatura*: Vittoria Colonna was childless, and Marguerite d'Angoulême's problems in childbearing were well known. But, more important, Vittoria is here saying that she is looking to Marguerite to be her spiritual parent, by bringing to term the new birth of Vittoria and will thus bring her to a place of tranquillity. If so, the baptismal imagery is striking.
- 37–39 *essendosi per sua nobilissima natura . . . a se mi veggia*—A lovely contrast here: Vittoria Colonna refers to Marguerite d'Angoulême's apparent comment on seeing Vittoria before her eyes; at the same time Vittoria, using the phrase "seen me from afar," alludes to the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32, especially verse 20). The words "turned back," significant in Old Testament prophecy, are related to the concept of God's call and the words of grace to sinners.
- 39–40 *o forsi nel modo . . . a tutta l'Italia*: Matt. 3:1–3; Mark 1:2–4; Luke 3:3–6, 16–17; John 1:6–9, 19–27. Cf. Isa. 40:3–31. Vittoria Colonna, with the possibility of Marguerite d'Angoulême's visit to Italy, sees herself in relation to the queen as a John the Baptist figure, proclaiming the coming

of the Lord. Such a reference was strongly evangelical in its use of the gospel or “good news” Marguerite will bring will relieve “the desert of our miseries.”

43–44 *reverendissimo di Ferrara* was Cardinal d’Este.

48–49 *la cui conversazione . . . cura la terra* refers to one or more of Phil. 2:4, 3:19–20; Col. 3:2–5a. Phil. 2:4 and Col. 3 seem the stronger references. Vittoria’s comments, with their juxtaposition of heavenly and earthly things, has resonances with St. Paul’s contrast between people with minds set on earthly things and Christians whose citizenship is in heaven. She is applying this to Cardinal Pole.

50 *lavorare in questa vigna del Signore*: The vineyard of the Lord is another of the many allusions contained in this letter that spans both old and new testaments. Vittoria is probably thinking of either Matt. 20:1–16; 21:33–46, or Mark 12:1–12, or Luke 20:9–19. However, one ought also to note the Isaian passage related to these texts: Isa. 5:1–7 (song of the Unfaithful Vine, especially verse 7) and Ps. 80:8–19. All parables of the vineyard imply reward, or wages for work. Here, Bembo is so keen to work in this particular vineyard (probably the vineyard of Italian reform) that he is prepared to take any recompense.

Letter 2.

VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D’ANGOULÊME, FROM ROME

Around 1540

3–5 *La dottrina similmente . . . fortuna si ritrovana* refers to Col. 2:2–3. Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Vittoria’s praise of Marguerite d’Angoulême’s intellect is here coupled with religious devotion. “Knowledge and wisdom” also reflects a multitude of references in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament — always linked with honor. Cf. lines 10–11 below.

5–7 *la religione . . . dell’anima nostra*: James 1:27, in which religion that is “pure and undefiled” is linked both to good works (care of orphans and widows) and “to keep oneself unstained by the world” — a happy text for the *spirituali*.

10–11 *et se io non credessi . . . che e l’humilita?* is repeated in Letter 2, line 13. Vittoria elevates humility above honor, in the biblical pattern, and says that humility is a basic element, of Marguerite d’Angoulême’s personality and life — as also suggested by Alamanni and others.

13 *in qualche opera per amore*: Heb. 6:10 and 10:24, where good work and love are equated.

17–18 *et perchè so . . . sicura dell’eterno*: See Col. 3:2–5a; Phil. 2:4, 3:19–20. Cf. Letter 1, lines 48–49.

Letter 3.

MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME TO VITTORIA COLONNA

March 1540

- 9–12 *que voi mi portate . . . et ben a deniro*: Cf. Letter 1, lines 48–49; Letter 3, lines 17–18.
- 13 *questo fermo . . . pietra d'humilita*: See Prov. 15:33 — “The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility goes before honour.” The “foundation stone” reference comes from 1 Cor. 3:10–15, especially verse 11b “that foundation is Jesus Christ.” A definite echo of Letter 2, lines 10–11.
- 24–26 *che dona contra . . . ne donera il merito*: 1 John 5:3–5. The victory that conquers the world is our faith.

Letter 4.

MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME TO VITTORIA COLONNA

C. 20–25 January 1545

- 1–6 *ch'io debbia dire . . . figliolo Ioseph vive*: Gen. 45:26–28, especially verse 28, which is almost directly quoted — “*l mio filiolo Ioseph vive*.”
- 12–13 *vive, dico, in Colui, il quale e la vera vita* — Marguerite then spiritualizes from the passage used in lines 1–6 (“alive in him who is true life,” i.e., Christ).
- 13–15 *per che quanto . . . iesu Christo*: 1 Cor. 15:22. Marguerite is saying that the corrupt human side of Vittoria Colonna's humanity died long ago, and that she had for a long time been alive in the resurrection of Christ — probably a baptismal allusion. Cf. Gal. 2:20, 6:14; Rom. 6:1ff.
- 16–22 *vivendo, nella nova carne . . . della sua eternita*: Rev. 13:8 gives one possibility for the lamb reference; also Rev. 21:1–3 — a highly loaded passage, full of apocalyptic imagery.
- 23–24 *per che siano alli suoi eletti scala*: This ladder imagery may be a Neoplatonic reference, but it is more probable that in the context of this strongly biblical section it refers to Jacob's ladder — Gen. 28:12. Cf. John 1:51.
- 25–27 *cioe un vapore . . . della repuceratione* is a clear allusion to James 4:14.
- 30–33 *et questo fa . . . che vi luce*: Light is a strong Johanine motif. See John 1, 3:35, 8:12, 9:5, 12:35–36. Also Rom. 13:12, “the armour of light.” For the opposition of light to darkness see, for example, Gen. 1:4 and 18; Job. 21:3; Ps. 112:4; Eccl. 2:13; Isa. 9:2, 42:16; Mic. 7:8; Matt. 10:27; Luke 1:79, 12:3; John 1:5; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 4:6. Whilst this passage cannot be tied to a particular biblical allusion, its imagery spans the Scriptures.
- 46–47 *se gli huomini . . . pietre parleranno*: Jesus' words in Luke 19:40.
- 47–50 *Dio voglia . . . avanti a Baal*: Questions of election and predestination are

important here, touching the different positions of Calvin, Luther, and others. The letter was written on the eve of the Council of Trent, which considered the issue in its opening sessions. The Baal reference is probably to 1 Kings 19:18.

Letter 5.

VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, ROME

10 May 1545

- 3-4 *che la tenessi nascosta in quel signore* perhaps reflects Ps. 61:3-4.
- 5-6 *in carne morta . . . di credere*: Cf. Letter 4, lines 13-14. Also, 1 Cor. 15:22, etc.
- 10 *che fa fluire si vive acque da lei*: John 4:10-15 — Jesus and the woman of Samaria, to whom he gives the “living water” which “will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” Cf. Rev. 22:17.
- 11-12 *che non saranno . . . di maggior fecondita* is possibly a reference to Ps. 80:8-9. More likely, however, it is an unintentional use of imagery.
- 13-14 *che sempre . . . alli miei bisogni*: the Father image of God is the underpinning motif of Jesus’ Theology as it is witnessed in the New Testament. No specific reference is likely here.
- 15 *concilio* is presumably a reference to the Council of Trent.
- 19-20 *la vera patria dell’anima* is a generalized scriptural reference.
- 20 *nell’infermità . . . interior salute*: More body/soul parallels.
- 22-23 *le quali non fecero . . . infremuit spiritu* refers to Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, before he raises him. John 11:28-44, especially verse 35.
- 24 *renduta a vera spiritual vita* is another reference to the spirit in contrast to the body. See line 20 above.
- 30-32 *quae sunt hominum . . . et con l’essempio* is another passage redolent with the priorities of the *spirituali*. No specific reference intended.
- 38-39 *et riverendola in spirito . . . et pace*: Gal. 5:22-23. The full list of “fruits of the Spirit” is: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Cf. also Col. 3:12.
- 45 *gratia*: The Pauline doctrines recurred frequently and significantly in Vittoria Colonna’s correspondence.

Appendix D

THE ORIGINAL TEXTS OF THE LETTERS BETWEEN MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME AND VITTORIA COLONNA

Letter I.

FROM VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, ROME
15 February 1540

Sereniss. Regina.

Le alte et religiose parole della humanissima lettera di V. Maestà mi douriano insegnare quel sacro silentio, che in vece di lode s'offerisce alle cose divine. Ma, temendo che la mia riconoscentia¹ non si potesse riputare ingratitudine, ardirò, non già di rispondere, ma di non tacere in tutto, et solo quasi per inalzare i contrapesi del suo celeste horologio, accoichè, piacendole per sua bontà di risonare, a me distingua et ordini l'hore di questa mia confusa vita, fin tanto che Dio mi concederà di udire V. M. ragionare dell' altra con la sua voce viva, come si degna darmi speranza. Et se tanta gratia l'infinita bontà mi concederà, sarà compito un mio intenso desiderio, il qual è stato gran tempo questo ch'havendo noi bisogno in questa lunga et difficil via della vita di guida, che ne mostri il camino con la dottrina, et con l'opre insieme ne inviti a superar la fatica; et parendomi che gli esempj del suo proprio sesso a ciascuno sian più proportionati, et il seguir l'un l'altro più lecito; mi rivolta alle donne grandi dell' Italia, per imparare da loro et imitarle: et benchè ne vedessi molte vertuose, non però giudicava che giustamente l'altre tutte quasi per norma se la proponesseno, in una sola fuor d'Italia s'intendeva esser congiunte le perfettioni della volontà insieme con quelle de l'intelletto: ma per essere in sì alto grado et sì lontana, si generava in me quella tristezza et timore, che hebbero li Hebrei vedendo il fuoco et la gloria di Dio su la cima del monte, dove essi ancor imperfetti di salir non ardivano, et tacitamente nel cuor loro domandavano al Signore che la sua divinità nel verbo humanando, si degnassi di approssimarsi ad essi: et come in quella spiritual sete la man pia del

¹ " . . . la mia riconoscentia." Thus in the Brescia MS, but *reverenza* in *Lettere Volgari*.

Signore gli andò intertenendo, hor con l'acqua miracolosa della pietra, hor con la celeste manna, così V. M. s'è mossa a consolarmi con la sua dolcissima lettera; et se a quelli l'effetto della grazia superò di gran lunga ogni loro aspettatione, a me similmente l'utilità di vedere la M. V. credo che avanzerà d'assai ogni mio desiderio: et certo non mi sarà difficile il viaggio per illuminare l'intelletto mio et pacificar la mia coscienza, et a V. M. spero² che non sia discaro, per haver dinanzi un subietto, ove possa essercitare le due più rare virtù sue, cioè l'humiltà, perchè s'abbasserà molto ad insegnarmi, la carità, perchè in me troverà resistenza a saper ricever le sue gratie. Ma essendo usanza che 'l più delle volte de i parti più faticosi sono i figliuoli più amati, spero che poi V. M. debbia allegrarsi d'havermi sì difficilmente partorita con lo spirito, et fattami di Dio et sua nuova creatura. Non saprei mai immaginarmi come mi vedeva la M. V. innanzi a sè, se non fusse che, essendosi per sua nobilissima natura rivolta indietro [*sic*] a chiamarmi, è stato necessario che di lontano et dinanzi a sè mi veggia; o forse nel modo che 'l servo Giovanni precedeva al Signore, a similitudine del quale potesse io almeno servir per quella voce, che nel deserto delle miserie nostre esclamassi a tutta l'Italia il preparar la strada alla desiderata venuta di V. M. Ma mentre sarà dalle sue alte et regali cure differita, attendarò a ragionare di lei col reverendiss.^{mo} di Ferrara, il cui bel giudizio si dimostra in ogni cosa, et particolarmente in reverir la M. V. Et mi godo di vedere in questo signore le virtù in grado tale, che paiono di quelle antiche ne l'eccellenza, ma molto nuove a gli occhi nostri, troppo homai al mal usati. Ne ragiono assai col reverendiss.^{mo} Polo, la cui conversatione è sempre in cielo, et solo per l'altrui utilità riguarda et cura la terra; et spesso col reverendiss.^{mo} Bembo, tutto acceso de sì ben lavorare in questa vigna del Signore, ch'ogni gran pagamento, senza mormoratione degli altri, so ben tardi fu condotto, gli conviene; et tutti gli miei ragionamenti m'ingegno che habbin principio et fine da sì degna materia, per havere un poco di quella luce che, con la mente ne l'ampiezza de'suoi viaggi, V. M. sì chiaramente discerne, e sì altamente honora; la qual si degni illustrare ogni giorno più sì pretiosa margherita, poi che sa sì ben dispendere et impartire gli suoi splendori che, thesaurizzando a sè, fa ricchi noi altri. Baso la sua regal mano, et nella sua desideratissima gratia humilmente mi raccomando. Di Roma, alli XV de febraro [*sic*] del M.D.XL.

De V. S. M. obligatissima serva
La Marchesa de Pescara

Letter 2.

FROM VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, ROME

March 1540

[No salutation]

Stimano gli huomini molto la dignità regale, massimamente quando viene da lontano per antica progenie; et assai più se è accompagnata dalla virtù, che ricerca sì alto

² penso in *Lettere Volgari*.

grado. La dottrina similmente et le doti dell'intelletto sono in gran pregio, et più s'honorano se in subietto di più felice fortuna si ritrovana. Ma sopra tutte queste cose è da reverire la religione, come suprema perfettione dell'anima nostra; et maggiormente in quei gran specchi, ove i popoli possono godere della utilità dell'esempio. Hor con che ardire scriverei io a V. M., intendendo che in alto grado, che io non posso esprimere, possiede tutte le predette degnità, se da sua parte non mi fosse stato comandato; et se io non credessi che sì bello edificio convien che habbi il suo vero fondamento, che è l'humiltà? Confesso dunque che gran tempo l'ho col pensiero riverita, onde che era già sì grande il concetto di V.M. per fede, che conveniva partorirlo in qualche opera per amore, senza havere in cosa mia altra fidanza di quella, che la sua bontà mi concede. Non sarò già così ardita che io offerisca a tanta grandezza la mia debil servitù, perchè non ho disiderio d'ingrandirmi, come farei, quando ella degnasse accettarla; et perchè so che quella usa le cose humane per fruire le divine, et passa solo per le temporali quasi sicura dell'eterno; in me non troverebbe parte alcuna per servirsene a sì alto fine, se già la mia bassezza et indignità non fosse occasione, favorendomi di scoprir più la sua nobil cortesia. Benchè temo che, penetrado al vero, di me cognoscerà il suo intelletto non esservi cosa degna di rappresentarla alla memoria, et perderà col tempo l'affettione, che per sua bontà mi porta. Messer Luigi Alemani supplirà per me con V. M., la cui regal persona Nostra S.^{or} Dio prservi nella sua gratia. Di Roma, ecc.

Devotiss. serva di V. M.
Vittoria Colonna
Marchesa de Pescara.

Letter 3.

FROM MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME TO VITTORIA COLONNA,
FROM PARIS OR ABBEVILLE

Late March 1540

[No salutation]

La vostra lettera, Cugina mia, m'ha portato tanto di contentamento, vedendo in essa la vostra tanto desiderata affettione dipinta vivamente, che la gioia m' ha fatto dimenticar la noia, ch'io dovrei havere di sentire in me il contrario delle lode, che mi dona la bontà del vostro giudicio, il quale vuole & stima ciascun simile a sè medesimo; & se non fusse che voi conoscete la conditione dei precinpi vitiosi, i quali l'huomo dice più agevolmente esser corretti per lode contrarie à loro, che per nulla dimostranza de lor proprii difetti, io non saprei conoscere la carità, che voi usate verso di me; ma questa ignoranza è convertita in certa conoscenza de l'amore, che voi mi portate, mostrandomi la differenza, ch'è da triumphi & dignità mondane & esteriori alla beltà & ornamento della figlia & vera sposa del solo & del gran Re, la quale è interiore et ben à dentro. Et mi par, mia Cugina, che per trovare questo fermo fondamento di quella pietra d'humiltà, non potevate prender miglior mezzo che di dirmi qual io sono, quanto alla fantasia del mondo, che

riguarda alla nobelezza & apparenze temporale & quale voi stimate che io sia per di dentro: perciò che io confesso, quanto al di fuori, che Dio m'ha messa e [sic] fatta nascer in tale stato, che l'abbondanza & il demerito mio mi dovriano donare una meravigliosa temenza; & che per il di dentro io mi sento sì contraria alla vostra buona oppenione ch'io vorrei non haver vedute vostre lettere, se non per la speranza, che ho, che mediante le vostre buone preghiere elle mi saranno uno sprone per uscire del luoco, ove io sono, & cominciar à correre appresso di voi; perciò che avenga che voi siate così avanti che riguardando lo spacio, ch'è tra voi et me, io perda la speranza delle mie fatiche, non voglio io perdere la fè, che dona contro speranza à speranza vittoria, de laquale Dio per vostro buon officio havrà la gloria, et à voi ne donerà il merito: alla qual cosa è necessaria la continuaza delle vostre orationi & le frequenti visitationi delle vostre utili scritture, le quali io vi prego che non vi anoi di continuare: imperò che l'amicitia, cominciata per la fama, è tanto accresciuta per haverla veduta nelle vostre lettere reciproca, che più che giamai desidero di haverne, & ancor più di esser così avventurosa che in questo mondo possi di voi udir parlare della felicità de l'altro, & se in questo qui conoscete ch'io vi possa far qualche piacere, io vi prego, mia Cugina d'impiegarmi, come vostra sorella; perciò che di così buon cuore vi sodisfarò, come ne l'altro desidero & spero vedervi eternalmente. Di Parigi etc.

Vostra buona cugina & vera amica
Margheritta [sic] Regina di Navara
(Alla Illustrissima Marchesa de Peschara)

Letter 4.

FROM MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÈME TO VITTORIA COLONNA

20–25 January 1545

[No salutation]

Cugina mia. Mi è paruto, havendo ricevuta la vostra lettera, ch'io debbia dire quel che disse Iacob, il quale non rispose altro alli suoi figlioli, quando gli dissero che Ioseph regnava in Egitto, pensando che trovassero questa nuova apposta per rallegrarlo, ma quando vidde i carriaggi et i presenti mandati da Ioseph, allora lo credette, et disse: bastami, poichè 'l mio figliolo Ioseph vive. Così, cugina mia, havendo io pianto la vostra morte, non dubitando però della felicità vostra, ma considerando la infelicità di coloro, a quali la presentia vostra è tanto necessaria (tra quali numero me), sono stata più giorni senza potere ben credere la convalescentia; ma³ quando ho poi veduto la lettera vostra, con la quale mi pare sentire la voce et lo spirito vostro ragionare con meco, è forza ch'io dica: bastami, et lodato sia Dio che la mia cugina et buona amica vive, vive, dico, in Colui,⁴ il quale è la vera vita, per che quanto alla carne⁵ io vi tengo buono tempo fa per morta, et che

³ Comma after *ma* in text.

⁴ No comma in text.

⁵ Comma after *carne* in text.

il vostro Adam con tutte la concupiscentie sia morto et crucifisso nel Nostro Signore Iesu Christo, col quale et per il quale voi siete morta et resuscitata, vivendo nella nova carne dell' agnello morto inanzi la creazione del mondo, et rinnovata in novo spirito, caminando sopra nova terra, contemplando i nuovi cieli, estimando le cose vecchie, le quali sono esteriori, esser passate, per che l'esteriore finirà et non ci resterà altro permanente che l'interiore, sì che nissuna cosa mortale è degna di essere desiderata da colui, il quale ha il suo core fisso nell' eterno Dio et nel bene della sua eternità. Ond' io tengo per certo che, contemplando voi le cose esteriori, le quali Dio ha fatte per accecare i peccatori et per che siano alli suoi eletti scala per salire alla cognizione della sua immensa potentia, sapientia et bontà, le giudicate tali quali elle sono, cioè un vapore o fumo chiaro per un poco et poi passato così presto come passa la lagrima della perdita, quando è giunta alla speranza della recuperatione. Ma chi le conosce non vi può mettere il suo core, et chi non ha il core, nè ancho imbratta in loro il corpo, per che vedendo et udendo tutte queste cose guarda solamente Dio, il quale parla et opera per le sue creature, et questo fa con l'occhio semplice dal quale è veduto Dio in tutte le cose, onde il corpo viene ad essere fatto luminoso, non vedendo altro fra le tenebre di questo mondo che la luce che vi luce, et così sono l'occhio et il cor vostro, a quali io offero le mie affectionatissime raccomandationi, ma non di me sola, anzi di mons.^{or} il Cardinale d'Armignac, mio figliolo, l'honore del cui capello non mi ha dato tanto piacere,⁴ quanto ne ho ricevuto intendendo per il testimonio della lettera vostra che la gloria di questo mondo non li ha niente mutato, cosa ch'io veggo essere molto rara in simili gradi. Però vi prego, cugina mia et bona sorella, piacciavi d'essergli madre nel absentia mia, et di parteciparlo delle gratie,⁴ che Dio ha donate a Voi, accio che le tentationi, che assaliscono dalla mano destra, nol facciano cadere nel abisso comune degli altri pari suoi, i quali in luogo di triumpho sono miserabil ruina della Chiesa, i cui ministri, se seguitassero in parole et costumi quei,⁶ de' quali si chiamano successori, i principi et popoli christiani correggerebbero i loro errori, et le bocche di coloro, che li sprezzano et riprendono, sarebbono chiuse, ma vivendo come vivono, se gli huomini tacciono, le pietre parleranno. Dio voglia che costui, il qual ho voluto nutrire per obedire alla sua santa parola et bona volontà, sia trovato nel numero de' suoi eletti, sapendo bene che in ogni stato et grado ce ne sono de' suoi, i quali non hanno piegato il ginocchio avanti a Baal, ma spero tanto nella bontà di Dio et in voi che, se per fragilità lo vederete cadere, l'avertirete come amica vera et correggerete come bona madre, la qual cosa vi prego a volere fare, come vorrei che facesti per la mia salute propria. Et con questa confidentia pregarò quel Dio, il quale può quel che vuole, et vuole più il ben nostro che noi non sapressimo mai desiderare che vi sia sempre quello, chi già vi è, cioè vita et salute, sanità et consolatione et che mi tenga sempre mai nella vostra bona amicitia.

Vostra bona cugina, sorella et amica Margarita.

⁶ No comma in text.

Letter 5.

FROM VITTORIA COLONNA TO MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, ROME

10 May 1545

Sereniss.ma Regina

Vedendo con quanta cortesia et amore vostra M.tà si allegra della vita mia, dovei ricevere questa gratia come un chiaro testimonio, che la tenessi nascosta in quel signore, nel quale la M.tà vostra continuamente vive, in modo che se io sentissi il testimonio in me stessa di essere veramente in carne morta; come ella se degna di credere, non dubitarei punto che in me non fussero tutti quelli effettivi per vera fede, che quella per sola chirità così amorevolmente scrive che vi sono. Ma quanto più mi sento lontana da tal perfettione, tanto più le sue efficacissime parole eccitano il mio desiderio, sperando in quel santo spirito, chi fa fluire sì vive acque da lei, che non saranno nel mio terreno in tutto vacue di frutto, se ben in altra più fondata radice sariano cagione di maggior fecondità. Rendo infinite gratie a Dio, che sempre come clementissimo padre provvede alli miei bisogni, havendomi hora concesso di ricevere la lettera di v.ra M.tà in tempo, che parte per legato al concilio il R.mo cardinal Polo, il quale quelle poche volte, che ho commodità di ragionare con esso lui, mi rappresenta le proprie lettere della M.ta v.ra et nella grave infirmità che hebbi, mi trovai in Veterbo, terra della sua legatione, dove regionando con detto signore, et con la sua christiana compagnia sentiva nell'exilio esteriore la vera patria dell'anima, et nell'infirmità del corpo la sicura interior salute; il che attribuisco alle pietose lagrime che la M.tà v.ra si degnò di spargere, per la mia morte; le quali non fecero menor effetto in me, che l'altre lagrime in quello, nel quale Christo infremuit spiritu, perché veramente grandissima necessità haveva di esser sciolta et renduta a vera spritual vita, onde hora che rimango qui, le lettere di vostra M.tà sommamente mi sono necessarie; né altra migliore eshortatione si potrà fare al R.mo d'Armagniac ??? che pregarlo che le voglia legger spesso, et pregar sempre Dio, che gliele faccia intendere et gustar bene, ringraziando humilmente sua divina maestà, che quanto più grandi si scoprono le tenebre, dove siamo, circa quelli, qui sapiant, quae sunt hominum tanto più la divina luce si mostri chiara in quelli suoi eletti vati qui sapiunt quae sunt Dei, tra quali v.ra M.tà in modo risplende con la parola et con l'esempio, che mi doveria bastare così da lontano per l'alto luogo, dove Dio l'ha posta; ma essendo proprio delle cose divine in questa vita purifica il desiderio, et pacificare l'anima in modo, che mai cessiamo però di desiderarle finché non siano pervenuti a la fruition di colui, che è vera pace et vero fine d'ogni bon desiderio; sempre la vista, di Vostra M.tà sarrà da me sommamente desiderata benché guardandola sì si va in Christo, et riverendola in spirito, et essendo i frutti dello spirito gaudio, et pace, io non posso dire che mi causi ansietà questo desiderio, massimamente essendo in speranza che l'ottimo nostro Padre o in Milano, o in qualche modo

provederà alla necessità mia di mostrarmela con la presentia, come si è degnato di provvedere alla mia indignità di mostrarmela con le lettere, le quali sono di tanta consolatione, soccorso et virtù alla mia debolezza che se v.ra M.tà il sapesse così certo, come certo io lo sento, me ne faria gratia più spesso, del che spesso pregarò Dio, il qual solo può muovere lei, et consolarme, che si degni perficere in vostra M.tà sì mirabili gratie, et sempre adempir in me ogni sua volontà.

Di Roma alli x di Maggio 1545

Di V. M.tà humil serva la M.sa di pes.ra.

Appendix E

TRANSLATION OF THE DEDICATION OF ADAMO FUMANO
TO VITTORIA COLONNA, IN HIS EDITION OF ST. BASIL'S
*DIVI BASILI MAGNI . . . MORALIA, ASCETICA MAGNA,
ASCETICA PARVA* (LYONS, 1540), 1 MAY 1540

ADAMO FUMANO SENDS GREETINGS TO VITTORIA COLONNA,
PRINCESS OF PESCARA.

As we know, Vittoria, there have been many Greek and Latin writers who, from the time of the Apostles to the present, have in their writings handed on to their posterity precepts pertaining to the cultivation of the Christian life. Since in this various ones have followed their own particular style of writing, guided, I suppose, by their judgement and capability, it is not my intention here to pass judgement on who is to be preferred to whom. I have had neither the leisure nor the wish to read them all, and if I had read them, I don't know whether I could make a correct judgement, or whether I should. What I certainly will not hesitate to say is that, of most I have so far happened upon who have written in either language, I have found no one whose writings I consider more *fruitful* and *useful than is this book of Basil* which I am now presenting to you in Latin. And I see that this is the case not only for me, for I note that many famous men who were otherwise outstanding for their learning and holiness have found the same, and not without good cause. If you are seeking weighty opinions, dignified style, excellent judgement and familiarity with the subject matter, you will find all of these together in this book, so that you could want nothing weightier, more dignified, more polished or wiser.

But this is not the place for declaring the praises of this most learned and holy man, particularly since it would require greater talent than mine, and greater fluency; besides, there have not been lacking very important men who have previously written more suitably, in very ornate and eloquent language, about these matters. Of course it seems that I should in no way neglect to mention, by way of excusing myself, that I did not undertake the task of turning this work into Latin of my own accord, for I was never so much in love with myself as not always to be

well aware how unequal I would be to the skill needed for such writing. Besides, although I could see that many men of outstanding talent and erudition had labored long and hard at this skill, yet I perceived that very few had come out of it "with praise"; in fact many had gained a "dishonorable grade," and very many a "very dishonorable." Some of them succeeded in voluntarily displaying their ignorance of Greek, some their ignorance of Latin, some of both languages, when they could quite easily have kept this hidden, had they wished. Where they were seeking commendation of their talent and learning, they might have found censure of their stupidity and foolishness. But if anyone ever had any reason to hesitate, I saw that I especially should indeed be very much afraid at the present time, when there are so many men of first-class talent, such sharp judgements, and refined learning in every branch. Moreover, since I had always judged all the toil of such writing to be by its very nature full of troubles and a very risky business, these troubles and risks sometimes presented themselves to me in this work in such a way that I would lose hope of attaining anything worthwhile in handling it. This happened to such an extent that, besides the usual difficulties experienced by those wanting to express Greek in Latin, I saw the work so crowded with forms of speech and needing translations so foreign — to say the least — to the speech customs of Latins that I quite lost all hope of coaxing it into Latin. But I think the wish of the man to whom in everything else I have from boyhood subjected myself and all my affairs, and by whom I have been crowned and adorned with the greatest and most admirable benefits, and whom I would willingly recognize and proclaim after God as the author and bestower of all the good things that are mine — if, in fact, there is any good in me or in my possession — Giberti, Bishop of Verona, was to be complied with; or rather his command — since no excuse of mine could avail with him — was to be obeyed. For since he reads Greek, and had derived remarkable pleasure from reading this work, he was aflame with the desire of sharing it with Latins in a complete and rather more suitable version than the abridged and — in his opinion — less suitable version they already had. Of the many persons he could easily have had, at home or abroad, and to whom he could with greater confidence have entrusted the handling of this venture, he chose me as the one on whom to impose this burden, even though I dreaded it exceedingly. I do believe it was for this reason: since he thought it wrong to take away from their more serious studies those who were able by themselves to conceive and produce something outstanding for the common good, and since he did not consider this task to be as difficult as those with experience understand that it really is, and since he could not find anything more useful for my services than this — he could not expect anything outstanding or original from me — namely, to clothe the offspring of foreign ways of thinking in our dress. He decided that I was not likely to do this in a way completely lacking in elegance. How reluctantly I undertook this charge, how constantly I was displeased with myself in its performance, and even now that it is done how dissatisfied I am, if he who was responsible for my undertaking it, who impelled — or rather compelled — me, and whom I often pressed,

should he have completely made up his mind to publish this translation of ours to do so under someone else's name, and not mine — if he is not witness to this, then my conscience itself is. It was not only that I could see my reputation for talent or skill in languages being set at risk, for why should anyone be greatly afraid of losing what he never really thought he possessed even in slight measure? Or even if he had it in great measure, yet did not think his whole fortune — so to say — depended on it? But it was because I saw that I would without doubt be condemned for rashness by those who did not know the whole matter as it had taken place; and because I clearly understood how impossible it was for the reputation Giberti has for an excellent judgement not to be stained somewhat through me by my poor handling of the matter. Thus in the very matter in which he who had not been afraid to entrust to me the good esteem of his judgement would have deserved well of me, I myself, by a poor handling of the task imposed on me, would deserve badly.

And so I approached the charge with great trepidation. I knew the work would be difficult and toilsome, just the sort from which I could even hope for the highest praise, if I managed to avoid the greatest blame. So I took care to make up if possible at least in diligence what I knew would be lacking, both in my knowledge of Greek and my mastery of Latin. And so for the two years before the Supreme Pontiff Paul III ordered Giberti to accompany that very brave and holy man Reginald Pole on that extremely difficult and dangerous legation to Britain, when I — as you might remember — was also in Rome, I searched for and consulted many copies from the Vatican library; I achieved so much in a few days that I do not everywhere regret the industry applied in the matter. For many expressions were placed in this text which are disseminated only in Greek were corrupt in various ways; (we have corrected them from the above mentioned copies) so that I can solemnly affirm that this Latin, even though not as elegant and as suitably expressed as it should have been, will certainly be clearer to understand in many places than the Greek. But since Giberti would have wanted me to dedicate this famous book to someone, and I could in no way have escaped doing so, he chose from amongst all only you especially to devote it to, Vittoria. Not indeed that you alone beyond all the women — or men for that matter — of our age need precepts of this kind — the ones I refer to concern not only monks, for whom especially the holy man undertook to write this work, but also all those who are eager for true piety. From the time when you exchanged all those choice things which distinguished you in the judgement of everyone except yourself for the precious pearl you have gained, and having dispelled the clouds of lowlier thoughts — if there were such — that might still stand in your way, you applied your very keen intelligence and talent to gazing inwardly upon the one sun of justice, you so surpass all these things by your life and behavior that you seem to have offered a light to everyone else, not only women but even very serious men, a very bright light shining as though from a vantage point, for reaching the harbor of salvation and life.

The reason [for his choosing you] was that he reckoned no one would derive

greater enjoyment from reading it than you, although you could see that you had of your own accord by God's gift already reached the place that men of the old discipline had needed so wise a guide¹ to reach; at the same time, his reason was by this very thing to make his benevolence toward you more public. Furthermore, when in Rome he had wanted to have some chapter read to you from what I had just translated, you seemed to be so pleased that you said you did not think the author himself had written so elegantly in his own language. Now although I think they will judge otherwise who, since they have no reasons of private benevolence, in casting their vote on this writing will make their assessment more sincerely out of truth, nevertheless he, because he thought you would be similarly pleased with our complete work, was all the more impelled to dedicate it to you through me, in that he believed I would do this all the more willingly because he knew I was most desirous of showing my gratitude to you. He had often heard me tell how four years earlier, when I was in Naples, I had detoured to pay my respects to you, in company with our friend Galeatius of Florimontius, to your island of Aenaria — it was by his order — and how you had received us courteously and hospitably. Although there is an additional reason that has led Giberti to do this more readily — he hears that you live continually among those women who, despising the enticements of this life's pleasures, have consecrated themselves completely and entirely to God — he does not doubt that you very frequently encourage them, as well as by the example of the holiness of your behavior, also by your words, daily more and more to make greater progress in the cultivation of piety. He thought that they would be more likely to trust your exhortations if you had confirmed with the authority and witness of a very holy and learned man what you say by way of encouraging them.

Therefore, receive from Giberti the work of Basil, outstanding indeed in his own language, but in ours only such as we have been able to translate him, not such as we would have wished or knew that others were erudite than we would do. But if anything in it is offensive to your refined ears or those of others — that is due of necessity to our activity — you must attribute that entirely to Giberti's excessive zeal for public utility, and pardon the need I am in to obey. Compensate for the uncouth structure of my words by suitable comparison with the sentences of the holy man, and by the abundant fruit of your own enjoyment and the benefit of others.

Farewell
Verona, 1 May 1540

¹ Presumably Basil.

Appendix F

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF SELECTED LETTERS BETWEEN VERGERIO, POLE, ALAMANNI, ARMAGNAC, VITTORIA COLONNA, AND MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME

Letter 1.

LETTER FROM LUIGI ALAMANNI TO VITTORIA COLONNA

c. 20 May 1540

Most illustrious and excellent lady,

I would never have imagined, when I left Rome, that I was taking with me such a great desire to be in the company of Your Excellency, and such a price for deserting you like that which I discovered in me during the journey. And such great desire the more it grows, the greater grows the distance of separation. But in this situation I have the favorable chance of enjoying the company of the most famous and revered of Ferrara my lord, who is no less and in no different manner troubled by the memory of you than I am myself. And yet that memory comforts us in that we recall and discuss it and that makes easier the rough and long journey through the Alps. We compete in establishing who of the two is suffering more and who has more precious and chance to meet you. Besides talking of you, I have been unable to restrain myself from writing a sonnet imagining your most rare deeds and then again many others much more devoted to you than usual as I have been touched by your example that I might resemble you if I may and become dear to you according to that good spirit that is meet to those same deeds. I do hope that time, experience and your example will awaken in me those divine inclinations that have slept in me for so long and that are still buried in spite of ourselves more than ever.

Now to leave these questions to a more favorable time, I want you to know that I am now in Lyon, where some letters for you from the Queen of Navarre have been given me, which will be consigned to you through mons. de Rhodes, who is ambassador of the most Christian and a most distinguished and rare person, full of all those virtues that one would expect in a very honored person.

Tomorrow I shall depart toward the court in company of the very illustrious and very reverend mons. of Ferrara, who has asked me to tell you on his behalf of how many times, certainly more than one thousand, he remembers you every day, and that he kisses your hand, full of respect and affection. I too am kissing your hand infinite times and recommend myself to your honored and longer-for grace. I pray God that you be happy and that you will be induced to summon me.

Lyon.

Yours, of your Excellency humbly and devoted servant
Luigi Alamanni

Letter 2.

PIER PAOLO VERGERIO TO VITTORIA COLONNA, 1540 (JUNE 1540)

Lettere Volgari (1542), 100r–101v.

Most Excellent Lady

I have written twice to Your Excellency concerning my journey from Rome to this place and I have informed you on the more outstanding things I have seen and on my work and thoughts. Here I am going to do the same. But before, may the peace of God that excels all worldly sweetness, be with you and keep you and may it fill your heart and mind.

The Cardinal and I and all the rest of us arrived safe and sound at Fontainebleau on the 6th of this month [June]. The Very Christian King has received him with immense graciousness and is heaping him with wonderful favor. At first the Court seemed to me a great thing and I believe that later it will appear to me even more so, because I shall gradually come to know all the princes and the outstanding persons and also shall become acquainted with them. And this I shall much more do should I discover that some have doctrine and spiritual light to know the ways of God. These I would enter by the divine grace of God that I may follow your Excellency who in turn has entered the same since a long time and has already gone so much ahead. I have been unable to pay homage to the Queen of Navarre, nor have I been able to give her your Excellency's message, because I restrained myself from dashing to her, as I am so aware of my ignorance and fullness and because she *seemed to me very burdened*. I watched and contemplated her for the length of a whole hour while His Majesty was talking to my Cardinal. I thought I saw in her face, and I perceived from her face and her entire body a very sweet harmony of majesty, modesty, and mildness. And also, according to your Excellency's conviction concerning her, I thought I was discerning in her eyes that fervent spirit and that light that God has so evidently given her, that she may walk to the beatitude of eternal life without stumbling on those blocks that are typical of this mortal one. Therefore, I shall resort to all kind of prudence to enjoy as soon as possible no longer from afar the spiritual food of those most sweet virtues. And if she will grant to me to listen to her only a few times, I shall not regret leaving the teaching of Your Excellency and that of the most reverend fathers Cardinals Contarino,

Polo, Bembo, Fregoso, which was all the same. My studying is like that of a pilgrim, that is, without a given order and all that I can record is of those authors who have described the deeds of our teacher Christ and who can best nourish our souls.

I have written four speeches on what is happening in Germany, but I am not sending them to Your Excellency since I do not know a *reliable* means, and I fear to trust uncertain ways, having expressed in them some things about the way of a good Christian, that is, freely and to God's honor. This is not pleasing to the world since quite often its ways are contrary to those of God.

I pray Your Excellency that you pray God for me for Whom at the moment I am cold and almost frozen, and for Whom I would like to be even for one day warm for his service. Christ sees my heart and desire. May He warm it with a spark of His love.

Bishop Vergerio

Letter 3.

PIER PAOLO VERGERIO TO VITTORIA COLONNA,
toward the middle of 1540.

Lettere Volgari (1542), 102r–104r.

Most Excellent Lady

The grace, mercy and peace of God the Father and of Jesus Christ the Son of the Father in truth and in love be with you. Your Excellency knows that just as in previous times did John greet that noble lady, whose name was Elect One — and this in a mysterious way — and who had come to the knowledge of the Gospel truth, thus I have desired to greet in the same manner Your Excellency, who is one of those outstanding lights who are showing to us a truth almost concealed by the darkness of our times.¹ And if all my desire and purpose in the letters that I write to you is to discuss the things of the Spirit and of the Scriptures and to confer with you, and in these ways to be stirred somewhat in the service of our God, should I not have already finished, as a defect, an opening that has such a long salutation as this, except that I have taken it from that fount where I gathered it, whence one is not able to take anything, except that it is always good in whatever place and time that it may be uttered,² because God will not ask us if we follow the embellishments and the rules of worldly knowledge and customs, only that we often frequent and nourish ourselves by his word and we speak and we do all things to the glory of his divine Majesty.

Now let me tell you about a very great joy and consolation I have had just these past days. The most Serene Highness Queen of Navarre has received me twice for

¹ “nostro secolo” could mean “this century” or “this world” but the use of the possessive indicates a more specific reference.

² That is, the Word of God which is always good.

four hours each time, talking with her about the condition of the church of God on these days and about those sacred studies and of very beautiful and very spiritual articles, those, I mean that Your Excellency desires will always be discussed. And since this conversation seems to me to be like a rich treasure worth preserving and showing, I have written them down and today they will be reviewed and copied. Then I shall send them to you to show you how high does this queen ascend with her intellect, how well she perceives and speaks of God's grace and of the power of God's Word. But one would need to be able to write not only of the substance of her opinions, but also of her fervor, eloquence, wonderful grace with which she spoke to me of those things. I am convinced that it would be impossible to say them in a better way. But one would object to the fact that she speaks in French and I do not understand it. And yet I believe that I have lost only a few words, since she knows a little Italian and Latin. Thus, since she requested my presence and at the same time wanted to be understood, when she had to use some difficult French word or expression, soon she would explain it or make it plain using Italian or Latin. In other circumstances she pronounced the words so clearly and so slowly that I could perceive the force of those terms. And also we were talking of a subject of which I have read and discussed other times. It will be enough for me having well understood and wholly recorded those concepts and Your Excellency will see them and record them with marvel, wonder, and profit. Praise be to Jesus Christ who has raised in these troubled times and in many cities and provinces spirits of that kind. I often consider and remark this phenomenon with marvel and consolation: the Queen I am talking about in these realms; René of France in Ferrara; Leonora Gonzaga in Urbino. These latter two I have visited and talked with while on my way. They impressed me for being lofty minds, full of Christian love and burning for Christ. And in Rome Madama Vittoria Colonna, to mention only those of your own sex.

As to myself, I am convinced that this is the way to purge and make beautiful the holy vineyard and church of the Lord, which is so full of brambles and darkness. What I mean, in other words, is that, if God will raise up spirits of this kind and of both sexes in this and that city or province, who will wake us up from the sleep that burdened our eyes, then our minds would be kindled toward the knowledge of the way and service of God, more than all the ink of the whole world used to write about reformations and more than all the ideas that one would conceive.

The Prophet says: His word He shall utter, and it will soften what is hard, that is, our hearts, our minds, our judgements, which had become like hard ice because of the world and its errors. Then the spirit of God will blow, and we on the ship of His grace shall speed through melting waters away from winds of error to truth and eternity the course and the impetus of God's Spirit.

recommend myself to Your Excellency
il Vergerio

Letter 4.

FROM PIER PAOLO VERGERIO TO VITTORIA COLONNA,
the second half of 1540.

Lettere Volgari (1542), 128r.

Salutation

Magister Aloisi Alemani has told me that he has had your Excellency's letters in which you send me your greetings and excuse yourself for not having been able to reply to any of mine. But I esteem your remembering me which I take as if it were a long and charming answer, and I remain your servant. The most high Queen of Navarre has given me your last letter to her to read and we have discussed it for a long time. She was evidently very comforted by the fact that you were moved to write and send it to her. I myself have no better good nor greater consolation than this Queen, who was born with those words full of love and those manners that kindle the desire to serve God even in the coldest hearts of this world. What I do is that I retire for eight or ten days from the court and live in beautiful solitude and I can in this way cultivate my soul and sow the divine Word; and after that period I go to the flowering charity of her Majesty and I feel that she can make that seed sprout and become strong and grow and produce fruit, namely, the knowledge of God and of myself and a fervent desire to serve him alone.

I don't want to take your time any longer and bother you, your Excellency, the peace of Christ be with you, I humbly commend myself to you.

Bishop Vergerio

Letter 5.

CARDINAL REGINALD POLE TO VITTORIA COLONNA,
the Marchioness of Pescara.

Epistolarum Reginaldi Poli S. R. E. Cardinalis et aliorum ad ipsum, iii (Brescia, 1748), no. XLV1, pp. 77–80. Probably dated mid-1541, shortly after the execution of Pole's mother, the Countess of Salisbury.

Since there are very few things that I read at this time, or become aware of from others' words, that can give me pleasure or comfort, all the more welcome to me is Your Excellency's letter, which has given me both great comfort and pleasure. And yet it was not your letter — to tell the truth I cannot attribute so much to it, however elegantly written and capable of giving comfort — that raised me to a better hope when I was bereft of all human comfort and all but completely cast down in spirit; The one who did raise me up was that Spirit who was speaking in your letter. Since He is the source of all true and solid comfort, exercising His power especially when we seem to be most bereft, He has the name of Comforter, and is called Paraclete. I see that Your Excellency has Him as guide of your actions and as master of your writing. When in your letter He tells me that it is Christ's cause I

am handling, in which I am not aware of having failed at all as far as lay in me, but of having toiled according to the strength and the grace given me by Christ, so that it might be accomplished in his honor, if I encounter more and greater hindrances than helps, or rather all hindrances and no help from men at all, what else can I do except comfort myself in Christ? Now the comfort is such that I acknowledge it to be Him to whom all power has been given in heaven and on earth, whose kindness and care is greater toward his own, who are those for whose salvation I am toiling in his honor, than we can have in regard to ourselves. So if we recognize this, how then can we doubt that when the right time has come for us as far as God the Father is concerned, which He alone knows, He will in one moment shatter all obstacles and bring to pass everything else we wish for in a way that is even better than we could wish. Meantime, He does not look down on our work which is His grace, in which we never toil in vain, even though what we particularly desire does not come to pass. Often we don't know what we want even when it comes to good things, but He knows, and He will make everything straight when He wishes. Blessed is He for ever. Amen.

Of course the things Your Excellency's letter advises me of not only comfort me, but they cause me to bear everything calmly. May Christ be thanked for this. But Your Excellency writes that she is afraid lest those whose help we are asking for may be made slower to embrace Christ's business because they don't perhaps see why they may hope for a private advantage along with the public advantage in such a way that something can be proposed to them in private. Now, I am well aware how important a matter of private advantage can be with men in public matters; we have of course not failed to put many things before their eyes. Previously it was Christ's teaching, now it is experience that teaches me that in the case of those who are ministers of Christ's kingdom, [and] who turn their eyes from Christ's cause unless they previously see some private advantage, such persons cannot see even this when it is put before their eyes in whatever manner. Experience, I say, now teaches me in the matters I have set forth, as Christ's system of teaching had taught me before — just as all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in him, so too are those of all private advantages and benefits, in such a way that those servants of his who do not wish to recognize a private advantage in him, may never recognize it even when it is placed before their eyes. So what must we do here if we seek comfort? We must go back to what I have just said from Your Excellency's letter, that is, to the providence of Christ for His kingdom. "Hope in Him and He will act." But if we are looking for a way of handling this business of Christ's, certainly when we've tried everything that natural talent and zeal can accomplish, in the last analysis that method mentioned by Your Excellency at the end of her letter, thought not the only, is certainly the principal — namely, prayer. By this method the Church and Christ's servants have always been able to do more than by all else that can be achieved either by natural talent or by human strength; by this means the Church has always come through all dangers;

by this means it stands firm. Therefore what Your Excellency writes which most closely concerns me: that she indeed earnestly commends me to God with love and with her prayers, as her virgins with whom she lives do by purity and by their prayers. This pleased me so much that nothing could give me more delight or afford me greater confidence of my well-being. Indeed, if there is any hope of escaping the many dangers and ambushes that Pharaoh lays for my life on all sides, it is certainly to be found among those sacred cohorts that God in his mercy has given in many places as though for a guard. May their prayers defend me against God's enemies. I never think of them without great security of mind, and whenever I hear that they are persevering in their duty, as I often gather from the letters of many persons, I never hear anything more willingly or with greater happiness. The result is that at this time I am experiencing great joy from Your Excellency's letter for this very reason. Therefore the only thing there remains for me to do is to beseech Your Excellency together with your virgins to keep watch over this their guard. Now it clearly becomes your excellency to do this. I have always respected you after coming to know God's highest gifts of the virtues in you, and at last when Pharaoh's rage had snatched away from me the mother who bore me, I received you in my mother's place. You were not like her whose son Moses afterwards said he was not, since she was Pharaoh's daughter. But you are such as I intend always to proclaim if you now undertake to protect me, seeing that I appear to be no less destitute than Moses when he was an infant, exposed as I am not only to the dangers of a river as he was, but to those of sea and land and, what surpasses all else, to those of false brethren. And so I am no less deserving of being received by a daughter of the great King, the King who cast Pharaoh and his army into the sea. I myself especially, who because of Pharaoh's anger also toil in the same great King's cause. And so again and again I commend myself to the patronage of Your Excellency and her virgins. I am always ready to pray for you all to that great King to watch over and protect you fittingly for the sake of His sons.

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